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History Bulletin 12

PETER SAILLY

(1754-1826)

A PIONEER OF THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY

WITH

EXTRACTS FROM HIS DIARY AND LETTERS

BY

GEORGE S. BIXBY

ALBANY

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

1919

840

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

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New York State Library

Albany, February 24, 1919

Hon. Thomas E. Finegan

Acting President of the University

DEAR SIR:

In 1785 Peter Saily with his family came from France and settled at Plattsburg on Lake Champlain. There he lived for forty years, during which time he was county judge, member of the Assembly, member of Congress, army contractor, military store-keeper, and for seventeen years, from 1809 until his death in 1826, collector of the Port of Plattsburg. He had an important part in the events of the War of 1812. He was a man of exceptional force, of impressive personal appearance and manner, of unusual courage, uncompromising integrity, and a power in northern New York affairs for forty years.

A year or more ago his grandchildren, Sidney Smith Palmer and Katherine Palmer, presented to the State Library a manuscript memorial of Saily with important supporting letters and documents, the Library in consideration of this deposit to prepare a suitable sketch of his life. Such a sketch had never been done, and any printed material relating to him or his work is of the utmost meagerness.

This condition was agreed to by the Regents Library committee and the following account of Saily's life in New York State has been prepared, recommended to and approved by the Board of Regents. It is now respectfully submitted for publication.

This little monograph has profited greatly by the interest, suggestions and painstaking editorial work and proof-reading of Mr Wilmer L. Hall, sublibrarian in history.

Very truly yours

J. I. WYER JR

Director

THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

Approved for publication this 24th day of February 1919

Thos. E. Finegan

Acting President of the University

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of these pages is to sketch the life of an interesting Frenchman, Peter Sailly, who for four decades was a striking and influential figure in the pioneer life of northern New York. The appending of his short diary makes available for reference a record of early journeyings in the Champlain and Mohawk valleys. A few letters, his own and by other persons important in the life of the State a hundred years and more ago, are also added. It is hoped that the history of a part of New York State which is not rich in authentic historical publications relating to the formative years, 1780-1825, may thus be somewhat illuminated and that incidentally a recognition, delayed but abundantly deserved, may be recorded of the substantial debt which New York and the new nation owe to a considerable number of French immigrants of condition and character who were attracted to the United States between 1780 and 1800, first by prospect of an alluring political and commercial status to follow their newly gained independence and later as a refuge from danger and distress at home.

The main source of information regarding the life of Peter Sailly in America is found in notes made by his grandson, the late Judge Peter Sailly Palmer, of Plattsburg, from original documents, most of them papers left by Sailly. Judge Palmer was an able lawyer and a writer and student of local history. The greater portion of the matter he gathered concerning his grandfather was turned into a series of articles which were printed during his lifetime in the *Plattsburg Republican*, in the weekly numbers from February 24 to April 20, 1872. Facts concerning the family abroad and Sailly's early life in France were gathered about 1882, mainly through personal visits to Europe of John Boynton Palmer, another grandson, and were carefully preserved by Judge Palmer. Most of the foreign information was secured through the assistance of M. Charles de Finance, of Lyons, France, and M. Ernest de Massy, of Langres, both descendants of sisters of Peter Sailly.

The diary written in French and translated by Judge Palmer, who was a good French scholar, and most of the original documents are no longer in existence, but the translations and copies in his grandson's handwriting remain. Enough of the material left

CHAPTER I

THE HISTORY OF THE UNITED STATES

The history of the United States is a story of growth and development. It begins with the first settlers who came to the continent in search of a new home. These early pioneers faced many hardships, but they persevered and built a nation that would one day become a world power. The story of the United States is a story of the struggle for freedom and the pursuit of the American dream. It is a story of the many men and women who have shaped the course of our nation's history. From the founding of the country to the present day, the United States has been a land of opportunity and innovation. It has been a place where people from all over the world have come to seek a better life. The history of the United States is a story of the human spirit and the power of the American dream.

by Judge Palmer has been drawn upon in these pages to give a general view of Peter Saily's career and some insight into the period covered. The Palmer manuscripts have been preserved by Miss Katherine Palmer of Plattsburg, N. Y., daughter of Judge Palmer. Miss Palmer has donated to the New York State Library the main book of manuscript notes in Judge Palmer's handwriting with the letters and other documents printed as appendixes to the present sketch.



This portrait is reproduced from *St. Memin. Collection of portraits*, N. Y. 1862. Plate 482

I.

EARLY LIFE IN FRANCE

Peter Saily was one of many Frenchmen who came to America from France immediately after the peace of 1783 between the United States and Great Britain. Reared under the French monarchy, he was a typical Frenchman of the old school; with abundant adaptability he soon became a typical American and had revolutionized his political views before the upheaval of the French Revolution. Saily was of good family, thoroughly educated, of sterling character, and brought a high standard of culture of great value in a new country.

When Peter Saily adopted a new country he took a new name. He was born Pierre Maire, son of Frédéric Maire who resided at an iron works of which he was part owner, in the old province of Lorraine, and who left the following record of his son's birth: "My wife was confined at the forges of Ste. Marie on the 20th of April, 1754, at ten o'clock in the morning of a son who was baptized at the church of Attigny, in our parish, on the 21st of the same month, by the name of Pierre. His godfather was M. Pierre Desaunets, my partner at our forges at La Hutte and Ste. Marie, and his godmother was Mlle. Marianne Bron, daughter of M. Bron, avocat, of Barney."

Pierre's father, on the 23d of July, 1747, had married Marie Sybille Neuilly, daughter of André Neuilly, at one time clerk or recorder of Thann and afterwards fiscal agent of Cernay in Alsace, and of Marie Elisabeth Wilhoffer, his wife. Frédéric Maire became co-proprietor of the forges at La Hutte shortly before his marriage and was, when married, manager of the forges of Ste. Marie, of which he was later a part owner. These forges of La Hutte and Ste. Marie were located close together. Frédéric was the younger son (the elder being Jean) of Jean Marie Quartier *dit* Maire, who was born in 1704 in Switzerland and who left that country about 1722. Jean Marie Quartier *dit* Maire married Catherine Belot, daughter of Sieur Belot, captain of the Swiss regiment of Purbeck, and rented the forges of St George in Franche Comté. He became a citizen of Héricourt, in the present department of Haute Saône, April 6, 1728, and soon afterwards settled

at Thann, Alsace. He was a Lutheran and his son Frédéric was a Calvinist but both became Roman Catholics on the 23d of June, 1751, by an act of abjuration.

Jean Marie Quartier *dit* Maire was the son of Abraham Quartier *dit* Maire, a merchant of Chaux-de-Fonds and of Les Brenets, Switzerland, who married Anne Marie Huguenin and was admitted as a citizen of Vallangin the 17th of April, 1697. Members of the family in France have traced the line back for many generations.¹ The family name Quartier became varied in Switzerland by the addition of Maire, to distinguish the branch from others of the same family. Several generations of municipal office-holding caused the words "*dit* Maire" to be appended to the name. Later, the branch we have been following dropped the Quartier. It is known that the change of faith caused some heart burnings and estrangements. Frédéric Maire had a bent for versification and produced an extended composition giving an account of his conversion; also several short pieces of verse, some of which were religious and others laudatory of the virtues of Louis XV and other princes of that line.

The family was distinctly of the old régime and Peter Saily himself bore arms for Louis XVI in his youth, having been a member of a corps of young soldiers of good family who formed a bodyguard for the king. A good hunting story of this early period survives and is related by Chancellor Walworth in a letter (appendix XX).

Tall, dark and slender, Peter Saily was a handsome young man. He was educated for professional life. In his youth he was lively and possessed a trace of what a European relative called fickleness. On December 19, 1775, at Larzicourt, Champagne, he married Marie Louise Eléonore Caillat, daughter of Jean Claude Caillat, advocate in parliament and fiscal agent of the barony of Larzicourt, and of Marie Thérèse Le Bel, his wife. His father has left the following quaint account of his part in outfitting the groom for the wedding: "I went expressly to Larzicourt at the request of my son to execute his contract of marriage. This journey with the cloth and other articles I had sent him for his wedding suit, and for the marriage amounted in all, making deduction of the two louis d'or which he had lent me at the coronation of the king at Rheims, to 300 livres, money of Lorraine." Advocate Caillat, his

¹ See *Famille Charles-Edouard Gagnon; petites notices biographiques et généalogiques*. Edition intime. Quebec, 1914. P. 36-38.

two daughters, Frédérick Maire and the latter's son Pierre had all been at the coronation of Louis XVI. The two daughters had their portraits done in the costumes they wore on that occasion.

The early harvest of young Maire's life seems to have been largely of business disappointment. He was drawn into the partnership of the forges but the ruin of the business was assured before that time. At the time of his marriage he was a deputy of subsidies, a position in connection with the taxes, at Larzicourt. The debts of the iron business were brought home to him and for years he was harassed by them; in 1782 he was condemned to pay, jointly and severally with his wife, the sum of 13,500 livres.

We can suppose that the early mistakes were not likely to be repeated, judging from a letter written to his mother under date of November 30, 1783, from which the following is quoted in translated form: "I apprehend from your letter and by what was told my wife that you cry, very often, over my lot. Your grief, my dear mother, adds much to the chagrin occasioned by my misfortune. You will be consoled from my long separation from you by the promise I made you to live with all propriety and economy, to be active in my labor and careful in the selection of my associates, that the deplorable events I have experienced may not be repeated. I will discharge scrupulously the duties of an honest and brave citizen and a faithful husband. My paternal sentiments are not equivocal. Do not doubt, my good mother, that the accomplishment of all this will render God favorable to me. I am confident that I was never irreligious and I can boldly again raise my eyes toward heaven. My wife has informed me of the arrangement made with M. Jaquet. Your condition is quite limited but your pressing wants will be provided for and this tranquilizes me."

Business misfortune with its imposition of financial burdens for which he was not responsible evidently was the main cause of his departure from France, and of his change of name and country.

II

TRAVELER AND IMMIGRANT

French influence in America was distinctively of two sorts — the earliest based on colonization and the later a more individualistic form of ordinary immigration. The soldiers of France came first, seizing the land and guarding the colonies when established. French colonization consisted of taking small sections of Old France and setting them down, root and branch, to grow in foreign soil —

a process of transplantation. How thoroughly this was done is shown by our being able to find today a France of the sixteenth century in a large portion of Canada, close to our own frontier. British power, the English language and the proximity of a great progressive republic have not destroyed the old forms and customs. The institutions of Old France, political and religious, still have firm root there. If the early French had entered the Hudson instead of the St Lawrence and spread out in the broad expanse of the middle colonial area, it would have been a vast undertaking to dislodge the feudal system of the French monarchy so transplanted.

With the loss of New France, the French nation lacked the means to alleviate hard conditions at home by the colonization policy, and the seeds soon began to sprout for the great harvest of revolution. Toward the end of the eighteenth century, France and the American colonies became friends. France supplied ideas of pure democracy which promptly took root in this country, while America furnished principles of conservative republicanism and representative government. Lafayette and his companions did much to popularize new thoughts of social philosophy in this country and gave great vogue to American ideas in France. Many immigrants came and the incorporation of French elements has had a considerable influence in determining lines of progress; while the introduction of the better types of French life and manners has had much to do with advancing civilization in America. Of this sort was Peter Saily's contribution to his adopted country. With other French immigrants he did much to elevate the standard of living and to forward development in the northeastern part of New York State where he settled.

Saily first visited America in 1784 on a trip of inspection to see what the new world had to offer for a fresh start in life. His diary of a portion of his journeyings is given herewith (appendix II). On April 4th he sailed from Paimboeuf and May 11th found him in Philadelphia. Iron making was uppermost in his mind at the start and he was on the outlook for iron ore, forges, water power and mills. He visited the iron works at Newark, N. J., and went on to New York. Thence he immediately set out for Albany, the outpost for two main areas of settlement then opening in this State, the Mohawk valley and the west shore of Lake Champlain. Exploring the Mohawk territory, he was on the point of buying land there; but not securing the terms he sought, passed on.

Returning to Albany, he fell in with William Gilliland, whose land on Lake Champlain appeared attractive, and with Gilliland he made a trip to the north. Setting out by wagon, they reached Lake George, which they traversed in a canoe, then taking a sloop on Lake Champlain.

Embarking at Fort Ticonderoga, Saily entered an area which attracted him by its picturesque features and business possibilities. The beauties of the landscape charmed him as it has all travelers. The broadening view on the way north intensified the effect. Here and there a peak emerging from the timber gave a lofty touch, while the virgin forest spreading over the country and the many hills and mountains suggesting minerals, all gave to the observing pioneer the impression of great natural resources and stored-up wealth ready for the taking. Streams entering the lake gave promise of mill sites and means of floating logs during the process of clearing the land for cultivation. There was, as there is now, a picturesque effect of action in the mountain ranges. The abrupt slopes of the Adirondacks, many of them close to the lake, gave the suggestion of a march of the mountains as opposed to the broad plain to the east of the lake with the retreating and more gradual slopes of the Green mountains beyond. Densely wooded shores, points and islands, in the freshness of early summer, with the brilliantly tinted mountain masses at morning and evening, all helped to produce matchless scenes of beauty which delighted our French home-seeker. The scene on every hand was similar to that which had greeted the eyes of Saily's fellow countryman, Samuel Champlain, on his voyage of discovery a century and three-quarters before, and the romance of a rediscovery must have affected the susceptible mind of Saily. On their voyage Saily and his companion came opposite the mouth of the Saranac river. No more beautiful stream ever flowed into ocean or lake than the Saranac of that day, rushing down from lakes in the heart of the Adirondacks, through the primeval wilderness to the waters of Lake Champlain. Its mouth, guarded by Norway pines and other giants of the forest, contained two lovely little islands embowered in trailing vines and wild flowers: and the charm of the place was further accentuated by a picturesque little cove with a pebbly beach.

The voyager was tempted by the surpassing beauty on every side and the commercial possibilities of the Champlain valley, but hesitated to settle, anticipating the coming of another war with Great Britain and the devastation to be wrought thereby. He passed on

and viewed some of the seignories of Canada, returning over the same route through the Champlain valley and going back to France the same year. Franklin had a like vision as to a second war, when he described the first war with the mother country as the "War of the Revolution", adding, "the war for independence is yet to be fought." But in spite of doubts, the following year, 1785, saw Peter Saily returning to Lake Champlain and becoming one of the founders of Plattsburg at the mouth of the Saranac.

Prior to and during the Revolution, civilization was at a low ebb in the Champlain valley. In Canada there were plenty of seignories and a considerable population, especially along the banks of streams, but south of Canada all was confusion for a hundred miles or more on both sides of Lake Champlain. The British and French had disputed the territory until 1759 and after that the colonies were not strong enough to assure safety for settlers. The French settlement at Crown Point had promised well for a time and there had been considerable progress toward civilization. It had been an extension of the Canadian system of development under the French, a peasant form of settlement of a distinctly feudal character. The French settlers had led a reasonably happy life between raids, under the guns of the fort, and at times there had been regular communication with Canada by sailing and row boats. But the French improvements had all disappeared and the whole section was a rough and dangerous country more fitted for the exploits of men like the Vermonters, especially those bands of rugged and pugnacious pioneers led by Ethan Allen and his friends, or for the type of settlers Gilliland had brought in before the Revolution, the latter being of the poorer class, who had suffered enough in their former homes to make them thankful for almost anything and content with the roughest surroundings.

This unsatisfactory condition of the Champlain valley continued until Burgoyne's army of invasion was finally defeated; and even later the territory was much overrun with rough elements until after the peace. Then both sides of the lake began to revive, although the shadow of the civil war growing out of the New Hampshire grants still clouded prospects in Vermont. As soon as peace was established men of substance and importance turned their faces toward the Champlain valley and when they came they brought the existing type of colonial civilization, with moderate supplies of capital, most of the ordinary comforts of those days and some of the luxuries.

In the year of 1785, at the mouth of the Saranac river, was planted a new settlement destined to become the most important on Lake Champlain. Bringing a small amount of milling machinery and large amounts of energy and ambition, a band of pioneers led by the Platts came to subdue what was literally a wilderness. Here they set themselves down on both sides of the river and made their dwellings and places of business amid most picturesque surroundings. Nature's sway was complete and it was years before the works of man seriously marred the scenery.

In soliciting recruits for the settlement Zephaniah Platt used these words: "I could wish none but sober, industrious men to settle in said township, such as bid fair to do well for themselves." Both the proprietors and settlers were a goodly kind of men and laid a solid foundation for the town. A new town was organized in 1785, at first about seven miles square, and both town and village were named Plattsburg. It was no mean company with which Saily cast in his lot. Zephaniah Platt, a great landowner in the Hudson, Mohawk and Champlain valleys, was the leading spirit. One of the proprietors of the new town site was Melancton Smith who was among the foremost men of the State and who later died of yellow fever in New York at a time when he expected to pass his declining years in Plattsburg. Smith and Platt in 1788 exercised controlling influence at Poughkeepsie for the ratification of the Constitution of the United States. Smith was a leader in the debate, first standing with Clinton against the Constitution and later turning the tide in its favor. Platt was a Regent of the University of the State of New York (1791-1808) and was father of Jonas Platt, another of New York's famous men who came later to end his days on one of the Platt properties near the Saranac. Ezra l'Hommedieu was another of the proprietors, as was also Thomas Treadwell. There was a Clintonian tinge to the roster of the early Plattsburg notables which was still more apparent a few years later, when Clinton county was set off from Washington county and the Governor's friends took advantage of the opportunity to honor his name.

Saily embarked with his family at L'Orient in France on March 22, 1785, on board the royal packet *Le Courier de l'Europe*, Cornic Durmoulin, master. Landing in New York, Saily made his first extended stop at Albany, where he established his family for a time. Bearing a letter from a Mr St John, said to have been of the French diplomatic service (appendix III), Saily fell in with Zephaniah

Platt, who was then engaged in obtaining settlers for Plattsburg. Saily bought of Platt a tract of 100 acres on Cumberland Head, a rocky promontory 3 miles from the site of the new village. At Cumberland Head was the boat landing for the settlement.

The first winter Saily spent mainly in the north, his family residing in a house taken by him in Albany. In the spring of 1786 they set out from Albany over the even then well-worn road to Skenesborough (Whitehall) and there took boat for Plattsburg. There was a substantial movement of immigration into the Champlain valley at that time and not a few families had Plattsburg as their destination. But this was a great plunge for women and children brought up in a settled community. The banks of Lake Champlain were thickly wooded and, whenever a stop was made, the eyes of wild animals peered from the leaves observing the intruders. It was not safe to wander in the woods for there were plenty of bears, panthers, wolves and other large animals ready to repel the civilized invaders of the wilds. At Cumberland Head the Saily family moved into a new log house and the necessary trips to the village were through thick woods full of wild life.

The Saily family at its early Plattsburg home consisted of Peter, his wife Maria Louise Eleonore Caillat, their three children, Charles Lewis, Julia J., and Maria Louise Eleonore Sybille Bernadine (called Bernadine¹) and Mrs Saily's school friend and companion, Marianne Adelaide Grellier. The youngest child, Emilia, was left behind with relatives in France and some years later while a young girl suffered imprisonment with her maternal grandmother and aunt through the enforcement of the revolutionary laws. It is said that she treated the flag of the new government with disrespect. In after years she used to relate how, while confined in the Bastille, she watched the marks on the doors which indicated which of the prisoners were to go to execution. When about twenty years of age she came to her father in his American home. Mrs Saily lived only a few months after reaching Plattsburg, dying December 23, 1786. This is said to have been the first death in the new settlement. On June 8, 1789, Saily married Miss Grellier, which is said to have been the first wedding in the town. Three children were the result of this union: Eleonore Marie, Charlotte Teresa, and Frederick Lewis Charles.

¹ She married Marin François Durand, landowner and deputy collector of customs at Plattsburg. A daughter, Julia Jane Durand, married Charles Edouard Gagnon, whose family is treated in *Famille Charles-Edouard Gagnon: petites notices biographiques et généalogiques*. Edition intime. Quebec, 1914. 45 p.



At first Saily was strongly imbued with the idea of becoming an iron master in the New World. But by May 1785, he had renounced this plan and set his mind on peltries. He brought about 30,000 francs worth of French goods with the idea of opening up an export and import business with France. These goods were purchased on credit in France and were mainly paid for with furs obtained from the Indians or money derived therefrom. He soon found, however, that his trade was better served by purchasing in the wholesale markets of the United States.

There is an interesting though brief parallel between the lives of Saily and John Jacob Astor, with the added element of personal contact. Both men were attracted to the fur trade on their arrival in America at about the same time. Astor made Albany his headquarters for his northern trade. At Plattsburg the two men had personal and business relations, developing mutual respect and esteem. Astor frequently came to Plattsburg and stayed at Saily's house and, it is related, would spend the night sleeping in front of Saily's big open fire in the kitchen. Saily prospered, but not as did Astor, whose mind was completely filled with business; Saily early developed an interest in public affairs and civic improvements, which occupied a large part of his time, such things being crowded out of Astor's mind until much later in life. The Indians with whom Astor traded came to Saily's house and also slept in the kitchen before the fire. One of the little girls, then of the Saily household, later used to relate how she was carried to the kitchen door to look at the Indians who were evidently more of a curiosity in those days than the itinerant white fur trader.

Saily soon found that his proper place was in the village and he moved to the mouth of the Saranac, though for many years the boat landing was kept up at Cumberland Head and for a long time was the only regular landing. He first established himself on the south side of the mouth of the river but a few years later moved across to the high bank on the north side where, about 1795, he built a homestead and other structures. He occupied this home until his death and, while the old buildings have disappeared, descendants have ever since occupied a home on the same spot, the present dwelling incorporating part of the old house. A granddaughter, Mrs Mary Waite Saily Warren, died in this home in January 1918, leaving children still inhabiting it.

Soon the same bank on which Saily built had a number of interesting homes. A few rods to the east was the residence of Henry

Delord, also an immigrant from France. The Saily and Delord homes were among the best in the village and for many years afforded hospitality to distinguished visitors. Between these two homes was that of Dr and Mrs Oliver Davidson, the parents of the young girl poets, Lucretia and Margaret, whose short lives were eulogized by Washington Irving and Catharine Maria Sedgwick.

Plattsburg soon became a busy little place. The idea of the settlement was largely mercantile, but there was an underlying thought for the larger forms of landed proprietorship and not few were the dreams of baronial and manorial development. The great proprietary domains on the Hudson and elsewhere had not then proved their impracticability, and delightful was the vision of the broad acres of the valley under cultivation—if only the forests could be got out of the way! As early as 1788, when the population of the village was no more than 200, it was the seat of a county larger than many a European principality, stretching from Fort Ticonderoga around and across the Adirondacks to the St Lawrence. The merchants of the place controlled much trade. Clinton county was set off from Washington county March 7, 1788; Essex county was set off from Clinton in 1799; and Franklin county from Clinton in 1808.

When travelers came to the new settlement after it was fairly started, they would sometimes wax eloquent over the high state of civilization found there. In Winterbotham's *America* the author, having visited Plattsburg in 1792, refers to the settlement in the following quaint language: "They have artisans of almost every kind among them and furnish among themselves all the materials for building, glass excepted. Polite circles may here be found and the genteel traveler be entertained with the luxuries of a seaport, a tune on the harpsicord and a philosophical conversation." Who the Plattsburger was who furnished the "philosophical conversation" is shrouded in mystery but there were several capable of the performance, including Peter Saily. While the dwelling houses were not so large as often found in other settlements, still some of them were commodious and the open-air life of summer was more delightful and interesting there than in many more settled regions.

In the new community Saily immediately took a prominent position. He fitted into the mercantile side of the new life perfectly, enlarged his business and helped to pull down the forest by making potash out of the ashes of the trees and by taking spars and timber

to float down the lake and the Richelieu and St Lawrence rivers for the overseas trade. Loaded boats came up to and past his door and went out with his potash and the various forms of country produce in which he dealt

Until about 1805 he devoted himself assiduously to the business of merchandizing, dealing in peltries, manufacturing, shipping, and receiving large quantities of goods. His transactions were large and he set up a store on Grand Isle in Lake Champlain and another at Missisquoi bay on the east side of the lake, and later was interested with his son Charles in a store at Champlain on the Canadian border, about 24 miles north of Plattsburg. The merchants of Plattsburg in the early days procured their goods largely from New York, Albany and Troy. Saily was generally represented in the southern markets by D. & J. Merritt, of Troy. He also traded with G. & J. Aspinwall, W. & H. Onderdonk, William and James Bailey, and Bailey and Fort, of New York; James and A. Kane, Cadwell, Van Ingen & Company, and Caldwell & Son, of Albany; George and Benjamin Tibbitts, Gorham & Company, I. D. & R. Selden, and Selden & Jones, of Lansingburg. In the summer, merchandise was hauled by wagon between Troy and Whitehall and on the lake carried in sloops and bateaux. In the winter there was considerable exchange of goods by sleigh, the principal outgoing product being potash.

To obtain a picture of the early Saily period it is only necessary to take a composite view of the colonial period as found off the main-traveled highways—heavy stage and good sleigh traffic in winter; the lighter stage travel of summer; the coming and going of the lazy sloops and the bateaux propelled with oars. To the colonial features should be added the slight variations growing out of the Revolution. While the refinements of life were for the few rather than the many, those who enjoyed them had much to be thankful for and, barring one or two inconveniences, the most fastidious person of the present day could find acceptable hospitality in the old houses like those of Saily, Delord and the Platts. The Spanish Main contributed many things which were brought up from the distributing depots at New York, not the least desired in those days being the old Jamaica rum. Byron might easily have made his couplet on the soothing effects of religion and the West Indian product while on a visit to the Saranac. The steamboats soon brought the outside world nearer with some of its sophistications but business and social life were still at long range. The

nearest social center to the south was Albany. The nearest government depository was for many years in New York and we can imagine many a trip made by Collector Saily with his body swathed with coin bags well filled with gold. Much of the business of the country was handled by orders, bills of exchange and consignments of goods; every merchant was largely dependent on himself and the larger dealers had often to perform many of the offices of bankers.

Socially there were many forms of activity which came to white heat when notables arrived needing entertainment. At ordinary times there were the supper parties and old quilting bees, with card games for those so inclined and for a masculine set sometimes good high play with convivial accompaniment. It is from the hither side of the period that faint recollections come of a robust masculine circle, of which Chancellor Walworth was the youngest member, where often an I O U was used to supplement a pile of real coin.

Plattsburg had from the first abjured all allegiance to the forms of royalty and nobility, but always did enjoy visiting notables who might come its way. Civic hospitality was always extended on occasion and Saily, Delord and a few others delighted to open their houses. In the summer of 1817 the quiet life of the village was startled by the announcement that President Monroe would make Plattsburg a stopping place on a tour in the northern states. The village trustees were called together in haste; plenty of fervor and oratory were available for the occasion, but little ready cash. The idea of "drives" for patriotic purposes had not developed; but there was a sum of money on hand for the purchase of a fire engine, and this the trustees commandeered for the welcome of the chief magistrate. The affair was romantic, even idyllic. Military escort was provided as well as a welcoming speech from Attorney Walworth; the young ladies of the village boarding schools strewed the President's path with flowers; a party was given; church attended. On Monday the village outdid itself. As the President wended his way west toward Ogdensburg, the party came to a bower on the bank of a brook about 13 miles out of Plattsburg, where a superior collation was laid out to be partaken of by the President, his suite, officers of the army and citizens. In connection with this repast it is recorded: "In such a moment, so congenial to convivial gayety, form and ceremony have no place; age loses its caution, philosophy itself is taken off its guard, and the flow of soul alone triumphs." Mr

Waldo, the President's Boswell for the occasion, in his account of the trip said: "In no place through his extensive tour was the President received with more undissembled tokens of respect than at Plattsburg"; adding, "He partook of it [the collation] with a heart beating in unison with those of his patriotic countrymen by whom he was surrounded; and acknowledged this unexpected and romantic civility with unaffected and dignified complacence."

About the same time that the Plattsburg settlement was inaugurated another settlement was begun at Champlain, which soon became an important point, under the leadership of Pliny Moore. There was much rivalry for many years and there were many contentions, the Champlain settlers often feeling that Plattsburg was a tyrant with an iron heel. Pliny Moore was an able, forceful man and if numbers and business had been more evenly divided between the two settlements, he might possibly have tyrannized at times over the Plattsburg end of the county. In these rivalries Saily seems to have maintained the respect of both sides and he had a long correspondence with Pliny Moore.

III

IN PUBLIC LIFE

Even before Clinton county was set off and named, that part of Washington county had a strong Clintonian trend. Among the leaders, the friends of George Clinton predominated and with them Saily joined in an allegiance to the Republican party (then the party professing democratic principles and opposed to the Federalist party) which allegiance lasted the rest of his life. Saily had a political career of his own, which, begun early, was followed through the administration of various local offices; which took him to the Legislature at Albany, to Congress, and placed him for the rest of his life in an important federal office.

When Clinton county was organized in 1788 Saily was one of the leading men of the county among whom the local offices were divided, he being made one of the associate justices of the court of common pleas. On the 9th of June, in that year, he and the other newly chosen officials were sworn in with due formality, and in October he assisted in holding the first court of sessions. There were considerable form and ceremony in those days in the administration of public affairs and the new officials meeting to take office swore in and signed the roll with much the same dignity and solemnity that accompanied the signing of the Declaration of Independence.

This was before silk stockings and knee breeches had gone out. It was many years before the constables ceased to carry tipstaves, and in those old days the courts were conducted with much ceremonious parade.

Sailly held the office of judge for eight years, was one of the overseers of the poor in 1789, 1790, 1791, 1803, and 1804, a commissioner of highways and school commissioner in 1797 and 1798, and supervisor of the town in 1799 and 1800. In 1788 he was second major in the militia, resigning that position in 1789. In 1802 he was made one of the commissioners to build a court house and jail. Court was held in an enlarged block house on the lake shore near the Sailly residence until the new court house, on the site of the present one, was completed. In 1804 Sailly was appointed "first judge" of the county. In the spring of 1809 he began to act as a commissioner for the lending of money. Under Governor Tompkins he built an arsenal which was finished in August 1810. About 1808 a corps of associated patriotic exempts was organized at Plattsburg, of which Sailly was a member.

In 1797 he took part in a meeting for the organization of a library association. In 1811 Plattsburg contained 78 dwellings, a court house, four taverns, thirteen stores, and eleven shops and offices, including two newspapers and printing offices, a forge, tannery, two sawmills, grist-mill, fulling-mill, hatter's shop, and two asheries for the manufacture of potash. In the spring of that year Sailly took part in the organization of the Plattsburg Academy, which was built by voluntary subscription and completed the following year. This academy became an important institution, and was incorporated and finally affiliated with the State Department of Education. The board of trustees of the old academy survived almost to this day as a functioning institution, possessing power of appointment of five out of ten members of the board of education of the city of Plattsburg, until a recent act of the Legislature took away this power.

It was a curious game the early politicians of the young State were playing in those days. They had just fought in the Revolution and disputed the divine right of kings; but they seized the power formerly vested in King George and took it to themselves, and with limited franchise and divers rules and regulations practically converted it into the divine right of politicians. Under the new system we find Sailly in Legislature and Congress for one term each, though associated with those fully able to keep him

there longer and secure his advancement. His abilities were well above the average. Perhaps he did not like being dependent on the great political overlords; possibly the latter did not find him quite pliant enough; or again possibly the one term of service in two of the most important legislative bodies and a resultant federal office were quite in line with his modest aspirations.

He first broadened his public life beyond his local activities when he went to the State Legislature. He was elected a member of the twenty-sixth session held in 1803, receiving 181 votes out of the 189 cast for the office in Plattsburg. He served in this session with Daniel D. Tompkins, soon to become Governor. The Republicans were in the ascendancy in all departments of the State government and, with the help of a new council of appointment, the State had been swept clean of federal officeholders, the former incumbents being replaced with Republicans. George Clinton was drawing to the close of his career and DeWitt Clinton was coming on the stage. The latter had, with Ambrose Spencer, laid firm hands on the political wires controlling offices all over the State. Appointive positions were entirely at their disposal and elective offices followed wherever the Republican machine was in the ascendancy. Ambrose Spencer became a strong friend of Saily. New York State was thoroughly boss-ridden as early as the first decade of the last century, but the bosses were amiable and broad-minded, for those days, when the distribution of offices was not in question. The chief end of man in those early times in New York State was to start the settlement and development of the untamed portions of the State's territory and legislation was actively, and to a very substantial degree intelligently, used, with some admixture of special privilege to make things seem worth while.

The musty little volume which contains the acts of the Legislature of 1803 is not a record of great achievement, but does show an understanding of at least some of the purposes of government and a keen appreciation of the possibilities of special privilege, all expressed in the same crabbed legal phraseology, descended from the English draftsmen, which, with increasing verbosity, has for more than a century spread such a vast network of words over all the governmental function of the State. There was much done to regulate the offices of counties and towns, roads, turnpikes, toll bridges and waterworks, with an abundance of commissions and special incorporations. There was an act relating to the Fulton steamboat, a law authorizing a lottery for great roads—one road

being laid out as far as Champlain in Clinton county — an act to prevent dueling, against the trapping of deer, regulating the packing and inspection of beef and pork, for the sale of unappropriated State lands, incorporating the New York State Bank, and many others. Locally there were laws relating to accounts between Clinton and Essex counties, compelling Clinton county supervisors to raise \$1000 to complete the court house and jail, and creating a ferry across Lake Champlain at Cumberland Head.

In the Legislature Saily gained new insight into the intricacies of American politics. He had left France when it was a land of special privilege, oppression and corruption, and he looked for better things in America. So he was surprised at Albany to learn of the practice, when a bank was being organized by act of the Legislature, of allotting shares to members of the Legislature to help the law through. The bank franchises were valuable and the allotted shares went above par before issue, producing a bonus for thrifty legislators who chose and were expected to sell out. Saily saw that the allotment of shares, even though the subscriptions were paid for, was a mere bribe for votes. He not only voted against the bank which his friends desired to and did incorporate, but he refused, upon the passage of the act, to take advantage of the shares assigned to him. The New York State Bank was chartered while Saily was a member of assembly. Chancellor Walworth (see his letter, appendix XX) is authority for this incident in Saily's career and for the statement that the distribution of shares was intended for all members whether they voted for the bill or not. Governor Tompkins also refers to this incident in a letter to Saily (Military Papers of Tompkins, 2:412). This letter is authority for the statement that the number of shares was sixteen for each member and the profit on each share, as sold, six dollars.

This was before Tompkins became Governor. As a member of the Legislature in this session, he also declined the bank bribe. He and Saily became close friends during this session and the friendship lasted for many years. There are several interesting letters from Tompkins to Saily which it would be surplusage to reproduce here, as they are available for reference in the published collection of the Military Papers of Governor Tompkins. The most interesting of these (2:412) is the one referred to in which the Governor unbosoms himself to Saily as to raids on the Legislature for more bank charters, the muzzled press and the rapidly waning

standard of morality at the State capital. In one of these letters to Saily (2:279) the Governor describes quite vividly the manner in which he paid out his private funds for the military purposes of the government and the trouble he had in getting his money back, finally having to remit by his own check \$145.80, including an amount of \$15 due Saily from the government for storage and various small sums for the subsistence of officers.

There is little ground for surmise as to family migrations to Albany but there is a tone of family intimacy in many of Governor Tompkin's letters which leads to the supposition that members of the Saily family had accompanied its head on at least some of the trips to the State capital.

Hardly a year had passed after Saily's retirement from the Legislature before he was elected representative to the ninth Congress (March 4, 1805 to March 4, 1807) for the district composed of Saratoga, Clinton and Essex counties. At this election Saratoga cast 2403 votes, Clinton 452 and Essex 477. His service in Washington was in the first session of President Jefferson's second term.

Saily was a valiant partisan and evidently a warm friend of the Republican politicians of the State, though not a pliant tool. It was altogether in their hands who should hold office, and sending Saily to Washington reflected credit on them, strengthened the party locally, and graced the New York delegation in the House of Representatives with a man well above the average in culture and attainments. He won the esteem and confidence of Jefferson, resulting in his receiving his federal office at the hands of the President. Saily had a strong command of language in writing, though there is nothing to indicate that he shone as a public speaker. He seems to have made his residence in Washington a solitary one; at least it does not appear that any of his family accompanied him.

Saily had to defend the President and his party from many attacks. Several letters or extracts from letters show his conception of politics, as well as his style of composition and some of his habits of mind. One of these letters, under date of May 26, 1806, was written to his personal friend but political opponent, William Bailey, then of Chateaugay, later of Plattsburg, on the subject of the post road between Plattsburg and Ogdensburg (appendix V). He apparently failed to seize the postal patronage as a weapon and left to Bailey, a political opponent, the selection of places for post offices and of deputy postmasters, promising his indorsement of

nominees, provided some "respectable" Republicans should join in the petitions, "in order that it may not be a party business but that the petition or letter to the postmaster general may express the wishes of the community generally." Saily had gained too rapidly in political strength and reputation not to have excited jealousy and made enemies in his own party, and he says with some feeling to Bailey in connection with the post road matter: "I must rely on your candor and do appoint you the keeper of my political reputation in that respect, believing it will be more tenderly used than it has been by a few demo-aristocrats here, who by insidious practices have raised a sort of hue and cry against me in this county."

The thought arises that possibly part of Saily's value to his party arose from Federalist friendships and connections, or that a desire to conciliate opponents, as a matter of party policy, had angered some workers in the Republican ranks. The true inwardness of this as well as of some other situations is veiled, for Saily's grandson, Peter Saily Palmer, had a way of obliterating, eliminating and destroying in connection with the Saily papers. Saily made a practice of preserving facts, as is shown by the substantial amount of information that has come down to us, and his intimate acquaintance with inside history extended over a period of intense partisanship, and war besides, when there were many acid tests of loyalty and disloyalty; all business, too, in the north was complicated with smuggling. Judge Palmer hinted more than once that there were things in the Saily papers that might keep members of good old families awake nights and, being a natural friend of peace and quiet, the judge evidently made himself an instrument for preventing undue annoyance. Once, speaking in reference to his grandfather's diary or record book, Palmer remarked in substance: "This must be destroyed when I have copied what ought to be saved. There are many things in it which might make trouble or cause annoyance to many good people." The local history of these early years is very much in the dark, for it was before the era of local newspapers in those parts, and family burnings and paper mills have consumed most of the old collections of family letters and documents which might throw light even at this late day.

The ascendancy won by DeWitt Clinton and Ambrose Spencer had not been secured without blows and there were plenty of festering bruises of a political nature. Aaron Burr's network of wires extended everywhere and produced many an intrigue and jealousy impossible to understand now.

In another letter (quoted in appendix VI) Saily shows what he had to contend against. The form of this letter, as it survives, comes through Judge Palmer's censorship and the elision of names was made by the latter, doubtless out of tender regard either for the feelings of those alluded to or their descendants.

Saily quickly recognized the effect of southern preponderance in the councils of the Nation. He perceived the territorial feeling in the South and how the statesmen of that section regarded the North, and how jealous they were as to the settling of the areas in the northeastern part of the country. It would have been, Saily saw, no sorrow to the South if the United States were to lose a goodly portion of the northern part of New York and New England; and he recognized the same feeling when the young republic of Vermont was begging for admission to the Union, the South and Vermont's big neighbor, New York, being in opposition to the plan.

Before his return from Washington, friends had renominated Saily for Congress, but he suppressed this movement in favor of John Thompson, of Saratoga county, who was elected, carrying both Clinton and Essex counties, as well as Saratoga. Thompson served a second term. We can only suspect that a bit of history fitting in here has disappeared. It was the most natural thing in the world that Saily should have a second term and it was hardly likely that he would have been renominated against his will. It may be that he stopped in Albany and found from Spencer that the gods of the party were not auspicious or possibly had a convenience in giving a member of Congress to Saratoga county, at the more populous end of the district. At any rate, Saily was acquiescent and loyally handed over majorities in the two northern counties.

In 1807 Saily gave effective support to Daniel D. Tompkins for Governor. Morgan Lewis had carried Clinton county against Aaron Burr in 1804 and was then running against Tompkins. Saily got into harness and secured a majority of 176 for Tompkins in Clinton county, giving him 159 votes in Plattsburg, a lead of 110 in that town. Essex was also carried for Tompkins through Saily's efforts and Republicans were sent to the assembly from both counties.

To show an old school example of dignified campaigning, another letter in the Tompkins canvass of 1807, under date of April 4, 1807, is quoted in appendix VIII.

When DeWitt Clinton ran for Lieutenant Governor in 1811, Saily was stronger than ever on the Clintonian side, and it was in that year that he joined with other political associates to found a newspaper to voice their sentiments in state and national affairs. There was too much Federalist sentiment to suit them, notwithstanding the waning of that party, and the newspaper in Plattsburg was not giving satisfaction from the anti-Federalist point of view. The result was the establishment of the *Plattsburg Republican*, one of the few papers of that day to survive to the present time. It had the satisfaction in its first few weeks of supporting and recording the success of DeWitt Clinton, and of joyfully chronicling the fact that Marinus Willett received only one vote in the county of Clinton, that vote, however, having been cast in the town of Plattsburg.

IV

IN GOVERNMENT SERVICE

In the spring of 1808 Saily again took up his merchandizing business and soon became agent to supply the small body of troops sent into Clinton county to enforce the embargo. He held this position under Elbert Anderson, the government contractor, most of the time until the spring of 1813, being then appointed keeper of public stores.

President Jefferson, having known Saily as an able representative, a strong Republican and a supporter of his administration, on February 8, 1809, made him collector of customs for the District of Champlain. By letter dated December 1, 1808, Governor Tompkins had called the attention of Secretary Albert Gallatin to suspicions which had arisen as to the fidelity of the then collector, Brigadier General Melancton Lloyd Woolsey, and suggested an investigation (Tompkins, *Military Papers*, 2:165). Saily filled the office without intermission to the end of his life. From the age of fifty-five on, he made this government service his life work—and strenuous work it was.

While the embargo was in force, the opposition to it, so active in New England, extended along the New York frontier. Armed resistance and even secession were talked of, and smuggling was rampant. While the appointment as collector was highly complimentary to Saily, it was not solicited, according to Judge Palmer; and it is even suggested that it was against his wishes.

The Champlain customs district, established in 1799, extended from Rouses Point to the St Lawrence river near the west line of

the St Regis reservation in Franklin county, a long and difficult boundary to protect. There were several important settlements along the line and between them wild territory crossed by smugglers' trails and roads. At French Mills (Fort Covington) was a British subject conducting contraband trade and other merchants were heavily interested in the illicit commerce. Within a few weeks after his appointment the new collector had personally inspected the entire northern boundary of his district and had developed a plan, which was carried out, for guarding the eastern part of the boundary by inspectors and soldiers. The western part of the territory was practically cut off from communication with the south, making strict enforcement of the laws for the time practically impossible, and extensive efforts would have met with prompt armed resistance. On this part of the boundary, reliance had to be placed mainly on individual efforts of inspectors; but to the eastward organized operations soon resulted in a great improvement in law enforcement.

By the act of June 28, 1809, exportation to British possessions was prohibited "in ships or vessels only." So all traffic to Canada was not forbidden. But before navigation closed the law was evaded by the erection of line wharves half in one country and half in the other. United States vessels would tie up to these wharves on the south side and the goods be unloaded; then the packages would be placed on board British vessels moored on the other side, all under the eyes of the inspectors. During the winter of 1809-10 great quantities of timber were collected on Lake Champlain to be rafted to Quebec. In the spring of 1810 about 2,500,000 cubic feet of timber, about one-eighth white oak and the remainder Norway pine, of the value of about \$600,000 were rafted into Canada, about half a million cubic feet of Norway pine being taken from the town of Plattsburg. In the spring of 1811 importations from Canada were forbidden. Montreal was full of speculators. Saily established a secondary line of inspectors in the southern part of his district and spurred up the collector of New York to keep a stricter watch. Many seizures were made and the smugglers, goaded to desperation, several times resorted to violence.

Early in 1812 the smugglers, having devised new routes, were passing large quantities of goods in the western part of the district, and Saily went through the wilderness to investigate, finding a weak-kneed population unwilling to help enforce the law. The

lumbermen of that winter prepared for heavy rafting operations in defiance of law, the revenue force being inadequate to stop the traffic. In one instance a raft manned by 100 men with 40 sails set passed down the Richelieu. The rafts that year resulted in large losses, for the declaration of war came, Quebec merchants failed to pay and several bankruptcies ensued.

In 1812 United States merchants importing by way of Canada placed within the collector's reach large quantities of goods which were seized by Saily for the protection of the owners.

The pressure of events made stirring times along the border and brought them home to the ordinarily peaceful village by the lake. Collector Saily practically held his residence as a fortified castle and at night slept on his arms, close by his office at the front of the house. He had stored seized goods in the house and an attempt to take them was apparently the motive involved in an exciting incident in January 1812. A band of lawbreakers came to his house in the night and, entering, found a shot gun in the office. Stopping to bend the barrel of the fowling piece, they went on to beard the lion in his den. Noise at his bedroom door roused Saily and he sprang to meet the desperadoes with a loaded pistol in each hand. The foremost assailant snapped his own pistol but received a ball, which caused a serious wound, from one of the collector's pistols. Saily fired again, slightly wounding another of the attacking party. He then dashed back to change his empty weapons for a brace of loaded ones which were in reserve by the head of his bed and, rushing to the front door, he discharged them at the party then in full retreat. The wounded man was helped into a sleigh which was in waiting and was driven off. Blood stains on the snow later helped to trace the sleigh to a house in the village. Nor was this all the blood shed that night; for Saily's daughter, Charlotte Teresa, later the mother of Judge Palmer, flitted across the snow to neighbor Delord's, in her night clothes and with bare feet, to give the alarm. Next day her course was traceable by bloody foot prints, for she cut her feet on the sharp ice.

One of the outlaws escaped into Canada and, in writing to the secretary of the treasury, Saily made a suggestion for extradition between the United States and Canada in these words: "Canada will be as it has been at all times a retreat for the perpetrators of crimes within our country. It would be desirable and would add much to our security should the two governments reciprocally agree to restore criminals." He also took up with Governor Tompkins

the matter of securing from Canada one of the assailants, Colbraith, who had fled the country.

After the attack on the collector's house, the report went abroad that Saily had been murdered. Ambrose Spencer, one of the justices of the State Supreme Court and one of the most influential men in the State, heard this report and wrote Saily from Albany as follows: "My dear friend: I can not describe to you the agony of mind I experienced on hearing, in a way calculated to command belief, that you had been shot and was left expiring. A universal gloom overspread the countenances of all your acquaintances. Judge then the joy we felt on finding that you had shot a burglar in bravely defending your castle. Indeed, my friend, though I appreciated your worth as a citizen, a friend and a patriot, I did not before know that you were so universally esteemed, though I knew you deserved it. I trust that hereafter the daring and unprincipled violators of law will refrain from attacking a man who knows so well how to defend himself. I congratulate you and your family on this signal deliverance."

Once after this attack Saily was writing at his table in his office opposite the windows looking out on the river bank, his daughters with him in the room, when two men appeared under the poplars in front of the house and were heard to talk about shooting him as he sat writing. He continued writing while his daughters, much alarmed, urged him to leave the room. Then, as related by his grandson, he said: "My dear children, do not be alarmed. If those men intended to harm me they would not give me notice of what they meant to do." Nothing happened and the men soon went away.

For a time Saily was entrusted with the payment of annuity money to the Caughnawaga and St Regis Indians and the former, during the war, more than once failed to appear at the regular time of payment, owing to British influence. In 1815 the Caughnawagas appeared and received the money. In 1834 an allegation was made by the St Regis Indians that Saily had interfered in restoring to the Caughnawagas the payment of their moiety. James B. Spencer took the side of the St Regis chiefs who claimed a release. Azariah C. Flagg, formerly the Plattsburg editor and the friend of Saily, who was State Comptroller at the time, decided the pretended release to be entirely lacking in authenticity. The payment of their moiety was continued to the Caughnawagas until 1841, when they received the principal of their share. When this matter came up

Comptroller Flagg used the following language regarding Saily: "Peter Saily was for many years an agent for paying the annuities to the northern Indians; and those who knew the man, need no other voucher than his high character for probity and uprightness, to assure them that his interference in this matter, as the agent of the State, was guided by no other motive than a desire to answer the ends of truth and justice." (Assembly Documents, 1835, v. 5, No. 318.)

V

WAR WITH GREAT BRITAIN

It would be a mistake to build on the modest personality of Peter Saily a great character of the War of 1812. He did, however, take a leading part in the struggle in the northern part of New York, was one of the staunchest friends the Government had anywhere and showed a far-sighted perception of the war situation from first to last, which was rare in those days of obscurity and blundering. When the young radical politicians of the time fomented the war and brought into existence a real American nationalism, they had little regard for the commerce of the seaboard and the integrity of the wedge of territory projecting between the ocean and Canada. The war movement was southern in its inception and made progress slowly in the north. The early war party cared little for the fact that a large part of New England was in the lion's mouth and that the Nation was in danger of dismemberment, if only the British jaws could close on this corner of the young republic. This part of America was so full of discontent and secession sentiment that an invasion from Canada seemed almost certain to succeed. But when the war came, the Republican politicians of New York dismissed for a time their many private feuds and held the State firm. Governor Tompkins proved himself a great war Governor and there were here and there, along the line from Lake Ontario to Maine, enough strong citizens to hold the border and subdue the disloyalty which was rampant. Saily was one of the most useful and vigilant of these local figures. He took a frank way of exhibiting his loyalty. He was continually abusing the administration for neglecting the defence of the border and gave warning of all the events and movements which were continually threatening and happening. He beheld not only the neglect of the administration but the treachery of his neighbors, the roads on both sides of Lake Champlain black with cattle seeking an enemy market, naval stores and spars going from

his district to the Richelieu to destroy the government and always and in all places the blight of smuggling and law-breaking corrupting the community. He saw his home twice sacked by soldiers and his village twice in the possession of the enemy. He witnessed the preliminaries of the battle and, when driven to a neighboring town, heard the guns which turned the tide and left him secure as the representative of the Government of which he had been a most efficient defender in civil life.

These few years marked the supreme period in Saily's career and the Battle of Plattsburg was the dramatic climax of his life. In spite of the modest and incomplete way in which events are recorded in the few things we have left of him, it is worth trying to draw even a meager outline of the local war picture, to place him in his proper setting.

War was declared June 18, 1812, and proclaimed by the President the following day; the news reached Plattsburg on the 24th at midday. Saily (though official notification was not received by the government authorities until July 7th) immediately repaired to the border, ordered his officers to prevent all intercourse and with ten stand of arms borrowed from the State arsenal at Plattsburg and some boarding pikes made for the purpose, armed the two revenue cutters and the revenue boat at Rouses Point.

On July 27, 1812 (appendix IX), writing to the secretary of the treasury about seized importations of American merchants, Saily added the following in regard to the defence of the border: "The British brig of war the *Prince Edward* is repairing at St Johns. We have no force on this lake nor a battery. The gun boats are out of repair. I am informed by a friend at Washington that the invasion of Canada is not contemplated to take place very soon. We must therefore be here on the defensive. But the British have begun by taking our fort at Michilimackinac. They may continue where there is a prospect of success. I think the regular troops ought to be near the frontiers instead of being placed at Albany. Our inhabitants are alarmed and are moving off. There is not a single stand of arms in Vermont nor a single man ordered to the protection of our frontier."

To show Saily's independence of character and fearlessness, we find him the author of many protests and warnings directed to government officials and calculated to spur the authorities to a change in the policy of neglect toward the northern frontier to one of protection. A number of these instances are quoted in the

appendixes, under various dates: July 27, 1812, referring to the brig of war at St Johns and the unprotected state of the country (IX); June 11, 1813, which, coming just before the Murray raid, proved immediately prophetic (X); August 4, 1813, when the lesson of the Murray raid was hammered home (XI); December 21, 1813, when the construction of the *Confiance*, the British flagship at the Battle of Plattsburg, was foreshadowed (XII); and August 4, 1814, relating to the impending invasion (XIV).

Our southern generals seemed to despise the territory they had been sent north to defend and left behind them on the border a record for incompetency seldom equaled. Weak skirmishing in Canada confirmed the opinions of British officers that America was an easy prey. Lack of sentries made possible the descent of Murray and the sacking of Plattsburg in 1813. It was only after many appeals and warnings that Macdonough and Macomb were set to work to defend the lake. Their preparations were necessarily of the most hurried character on land and water and it seemed more than likely that the defence, after all, would fail.

The real war was a long time in coming to Plattsburg, and in his official duties Saily had to grapple with a mass of details affecting the government in many ways. From 1808 to 1815 Saily acted almost continuously as local agent of the government contractor, as agent for the commissary department of the army or as military storekeeper in providing and distributing supplies for the troops. These duties were arduous, especially after the declaration of war. Before taking hold for the government contractor Saily remarked in a letter: "I will do my best after the first of January to keep the business of Mr Anderson going, and will, first of all, discharge a lazy drone of a cooper, who, I think, does not earn his victuals."

It was not always easy to secure the supplies needed and there was a heavy drain of cattle and provisions from New York and Vermont into Canada. The season of 1812 was very wet and crops were very much injured in Clinton county and Vermont. In 1812 Saily was paying 3 cents for beef, \$1.88 and \$2 for wheat, \$9.88 and \$10 a barrel for flour. Rye and Indian corn were even scarcer than wheat. Whiskey at 56 cents a gallon, "all wastage deducted," helped to hold down the high cost of living, even in war times. In the fall of 1813 grain and beef were very scarce in Montreal. Wheat brought \$4 a bushel and fresh beef brought eight to ten dollars a hundredweight. Smuggling that winter was very actively pursued along the border. (In 1799 Saily had paid for wheat 7

shillings a bushel, for corn 4 and 6, for oats 2 and 8; for pork 42 shillings a hundredweight.)

In January 1813 Saily recommended contracting for a thousand pairs of shoes at 10 to 12 shillings a pair, putting off the hides of the cattle killed for beef, in payment. In the same month, Freligh's mill at Plattsburg being out of commission, Saily had to draw flour from the mill at Chazy (about 18 miles away), sending back wheat, the round trip by sleigh handling 8 barrels of flour one way and 20 bushels of wheat the other, costing about \$2.50. Rye could not be had for a dollar a bushel. People would not weigh the rye but sold it by measure and he calculated the price to make the rye flour at least 25 per cent cheaper than the wheat flour. There was little corn and little of it white. A man from Jay sold 60 bushels of rye and 60 of corn at 9 shillings 6 a bushel. Also in January 1813 Saily instructed his millers at Chazy and Champlain to "buy all the rye and corn possible at 9 shillings, to grind all the rye possible and mix one-third with two-thirds of best wheat flour."

In the winter of 1812-13 Saily had much to do with caring for and supplying the troops, consisting of three regiments which were in winter quarters there under Colonel Zebulon Montgomery Pike at what was called Pike's cantonment. Colonel Pike was made a brigadier general and on April 27, 1813 was killed while gallantly fighting in command of the expedition which attacked York, the then capital of Upper Canada. Collector Saily said of General Pike that "he was on all occasions zealous in support of the laws."

On June 20, 1813 Saily ceased to be the contractor's agent and became keeper of the public stores at Plattsburg, and in December he became principal storekeeper on the Champlain frontier. When Saily gave up the agency for the contractor he suggested the appointment of Reuben H. Walworth, the future chancellor, then beginning the practice of law in Plattsburg, in these words: "Reuben H. Walworth is a very industrious young man, a very good accountant and very punctual. He is qualified for any kind of business."

About the second year of the war the smugglers, being hard pressed by Saily, started a campaign of litigation bringing all sorts of proceedings against the collector. With a man named Colden, whose goods had been seized, Saily had ten years of litigation. Colden called in Aaron Burr as counsel, who pledged himself to secure a return of the property seized and to reverse the forfeiture. But even the redoubtable Burr could not defeat the ends of govern-

ment on the border. Most of the suits were in county court and these Saily defended with such energy that he soon drove the smugglers to the wall.

John Jacob Astor was one of the American merchants interested in getting goods out of Canada. He sent large quantities of furs to Montreal from Michilimackinac when the latter place capitulated to the British and he himself hurried to meet Collector Saily, reaching Plattsburg July 2, 1812, with a letter from the secretary of the treasury, urging that every facility be afforded Astor and other merchants for introducing their merchandise into this country. Saily had already entered on the course suggested by making friendly seizures of goods placed within his reach.

Twenty-six bales of Astor's furs were immediately brought in, seized and rushed through to New York in charge of an inspector. In November Astor brought through to New York, in the same way, 27 puncheons and 19 bales of furs, estimated at \$50,000 value. In this lot were 20,380 marten pelts, 46 bear, 18,000 muskrat, 526 fisher, 6021 otter, 3389 mink, 2048 fox, 271 cat, and 6 wolf. In February 1813, another large lot of furs was taken out for Astor, and in November, 1813, another lot comprising 221 bales and 9 hogsheds.

In connection with these importations Astor paid Saily \$500 in lieu of claims which the collector might personally have against the goods, a perfectly above-board transaction, which was later raked up by a malevolent steamboat man seeking to secure Saily's removal from office. Astor wrote a letter to William H. Crawford, secretary of the treasury, at Saily's request, and that letter and a note from Astor to Saily are included in appendix XIX.

Astor on this visit of July 2d reported defection in Canada on the part of men being drafted for military service at Lachine and firing between troops sent from Montreal and the militia. This information was sent to Governor Tompkins by Saily through Major General Mooers, reaching the latter on or before July 8th, as shown in a letter from the Governor transmitting it to General P. B. Porter (Tompkins Papers, 3:21).

The war knitters were busy in 1812, as they have been in 1917-18. In December of that year Saily received from the Governor a box containing about 140 pairs of woolen stockings and 40 pairs of mittens, and a tierce and a half barrel containing 337 pairs of socks, 50 pairs of stockings, 20 pairs of mittens. The box came from the

ladies of Newburgh and the tierce and half barrel from those of Hudson. These comforts Saily sent forward to the men guarding the advanced line along the border.

VI

RAIDS AND SMUGGLERS, 1813-14

The Murray raid. On July 31, 1813, the inhabitants of Plattsburg saw a flotilla rounding Cumberland Head. It brought Colonel Murray, a British force of 1400 or more, and any amount of consternation to the village. A company of militia was hastily assembled, and in sight of the approaching boats the captain solved his dilemma by instructing his soldiers to fight or run as occasion might require. The militia discreetly withdrew to a distance of some miles and Murray landed unmolested. He promised fairly enough when the citizens interceded with him for the protection of private property, but before he went away he virtually sacked the town, causing great destruction of private as well as of government property. In a letter written August 4, 1813 (appendix XI), Collector Saily referred to this raid and forcibly expressed himself as to the unprotected state of the country. Murray's advance up the lake was entirely unopposed and was virtually a surprise.

An incident occurred during Murray's stay, throwing some light on the treachery so prevalent on this side of the border. Murray was walking with citizens who were importuning him for protection of property and, the day being warm, took off his hat to mop his forehead, when a paper fell out. William Gilliland, son of Saily's old traveling companion, who had died in 1796, dropped his handkerchief over the paper and secured it. The document contained information as to the best mode of attack on Plattsburg and a plan of the military encampment at Burlington, the handwriting being that of Joseph Ackley, an inhabitant of Plattsburg, who had recently come from Canada. Ackley was arrested, admitted the writing of the letter, and was taken to Albany; but no further action was taken against him and he returned to Canada, whence he had come, with his family.

Saily had sent some libeled goods in his possession and official records and papers to Peru Landing by boat and from there they were taken inland. He had also sent his family to Peru. His own house and many other dwellings were sacked and their contents taken away or ruined.

The Hampton raid. In September 1813, General Wade Hampton, probably spurred by the war department because of Saily's complaints, moved his army from Burlington to Cumberland Head and from there marched on his expedition for the invasion of Canada, which proved a fiasco. The officers and men fought well in the encounters that took place, but there was no plan of campaign and no result of any consequence. Hampton's force and other troops were later ordered into winter quarters at Plattsburg.

With his regular business, the war activities and the troops at Plattsburg, Collector Saily had a busy time during the winter of 1813-14.

The assiduity of the Vermonters in supplying the enemy is shown in an extract from a letter written by Saily to the secretary of the treasury, as follows: "Vast numbers of sleighs from Lake Magog to Lake Champlain are passing daily with provisions and other goods into the neighboring territory. They go in company and nothing but a military force appointed for the purpose can stop them."

Major Benjamin Forsyth, stationed at Chazy, while raiding in Canada, captured near Lacolle some British goods and several horses; and on another raid a lot of goods at Odelltown. Saily immediately claimed the property and received that taken at Odelltown, but the other things had been distributed among the soldiers as recompense for their baggage lost at Ogdensburg, February 22, 1813.

On one occasion an officer of Major Forsyth's command, on going to the British lines with a flag of truce, brought back a roll of carpet said to be a present from the commander at Odelltown to General Wilkinson. Keen on the scent for smuggling, one of Saily's inspectors seized the package and brought it to the collector. General Wilkinson disclaimed all knowledge of it and soon a letter was received by Judge Delord explaining that the carpeting was to replace that destroyed in Delord's house at the time of Murray's raid. The officer and gentleman responsible for the sending of the carpet was J. Ritter, major of the British sixth light infantry. This letter is given in appendix XIII.

During the winter Saily had a new experience with smugglers. Commodore Macdonough reported to him that one John Banker was cruising on Lake Champlain as a privateer, holding a commission from the federal government. His boat was the *Lark*, one of three boats built in New York for smuggling on the lake and used for that purpose in the summer and fall. She was about

three-fourths of a ton burden and, when rowed by four men, was said to make about 10 miles an hour. Banker had a crew of three men armed with muskets. The boat could carry several thousand dollars worth of dry goods. It would cruise at the line by connivance of British officers and tranship the goods to be smuggled. Banker landed some goods at Whitehall and forwarded them in two wagons, which were stopped at Granville by an inspector, whereupon one James Hooker, in charge of the wagons, presented a prize-master's certificate from "John Banker, Captain P. Armed Boat Lark." But Saily was on the trail of the privateer and, on December 6, 1813, wrote to the secretary of the treasury as follows: "I have had the honor to inform you by letter dated the 29th ultimo that John Banker had a commission for privateering on this lake. He has brought in a boat with a parcel of goods owned by an American citizen, which he took without doubt with the owner's consent, at or near the boundary line. He landed at three different places within this district, but did not report himself or his captured goods to the collector. By this new method smuggling seems in some measure to be legalized. Such sham privateers, without other defence than three men and three muskets on board, do not go near the boundary line without the permission of the British armed boats, which is easily obtained by the American smugglers. This singular privateer fired lately a musket ball into a ferry boat carrying passengers from one side of the lake to the other, in order to bring it to, at a distance of about 60 miles south of Canada. I have thought it my duty to inform you of this scheme, the deepest for smuggling that has ever been witnessed on this lake." The privateer's commission was revoked and that form of smuggling ceased.

VII

THE BATTLE OF PLATTSBURG

In August 1814, the British planned an invasion of the Champlain valley simultaneously by land and water. Sir George Prevost repaired to Isle Aux Noix at the outlet of Lake Champlain, where he effected a heavy concentration of troops while the British fleet was hastily outfitting on the Richelieu river. Plattsburg was recognized as the first objective of the coming attack and, on the American side of the boundary, military stores were moved southward in large quantities as far as Whitehall, while the population pushed forward preparations for a general evacuation. As late as July faithless Americans had been smuggling timber and tar across to the British

to help them complete the man-of-war *Confiance*, which was building for the attack on Plattsburg and which became the ill-fated flagship of Commodore Downie. On July 13, 1814, Sailly had again warned the secretary of the treasury of the impending invasion and had reported his plan to remove his office and records to the southern part of the district out of reach of the British.

The Battle of Plattsburg was a culminating event in several lives. It made Thomas Macdonough, gave well-earned fame to Alexander Macomb, and overwhelmed Sir George Prevost, helping to send him, covered with chagrin and disgrace, to an early grave. It was also a momentous occasion to Peter Sailly. His cause was that of the Government; his home was at stake; the precise contingency he had foreseen nearly a third of a century before had come to pass; according to the issue of the fight, he would be either personally and officially triumphant, or again a wanderer at the age of sixty.

At or near Montreal was gathered the large British force of about 15,000 men available for invasion. These troops included eleven regiments of regulars, fresh from the Peninsular campaign, trained under the Duke of Wellington. By order of the war department, an American force of about 4000 men under General Izard was withdrawn from the vicinity of Plattsburg and marched for Sackett's harbor *via* Schenectady, starting from Champlain and Chazy about August 29th. Macomb's effective force was reduced to about 1500 men before it began to be swollen by arrivals of militia from Vermont and the south. The feeling in Canada was that the northeastern corner of the United States was ready to welcome British rule, and that all that was necessary to move the boundary was a large and dignified display of armed force. The land expedition was under the command of Sir George Prevost. The brave but unfortunate George Downie, a fleet-captain, often called commodore, had been sent to take command of the fleet. The British naval preparations had caused the Americans to work like mad to prepare a flotilla to make their naval strength fairly equal to that of their enemy. Urged on by Prevost, Downie hurried preparations and started up the lake with the *Confiance* before she was fully equipped. Macdonough also had not completed the work on his vessels.

Prevost's magnificent regiments marched on Plattsburg, on two general lines of approach, one near the shore and the other a few miles inland. The advance was much like a review, in solid column,

with little regard to the American scouting parties which fell back before the British, causing such annoyance as was possible on the way. No regiments were ever better drilled than those of Wellington; and it is related that when at one point the Americans brought a field piece to bear on the British column and cut a swath directly through it, the vacant spaces were immediately filled and the column moved on without stopping, sweeping all obstacles from its path. The British progress was irresistible and, as the advance guards approached Plattsburg, flight became general. Farmers were early on the way with their families and goods packed in carts, and there was a continual stream of "couriers" bringing news of the advance. Duty as dispatch bearer to the rear was a popular assignment and it is more than probable that some of the couriers were self-appointed. At any rate they made a great stir in Plattsburg, rattling into town every few minutes, and nearly drove Mrs Davidson, who lived next to Saily, to distraction. She was waiting for Doctor Davidson to return from Peru where he had gone on horseback to look for a refuge. Saily had sent his family to Hampton in Washington county but had remained behind himself in performance of his duties as collector and military storekeeper. He wanted her, for safety, to go with him in a boat which he had ready and in which he departed at about sundown, just as the British were approaching Dead Creek bridge, about 2 miles away. She insisted on remaining and a few hours later set out with her husband, who had returned in the night. Virtually the entire population of the village left the place in the face of the enemy's advance. A Quaker settlement in Peru became a general rendezvous for the fleeing inhabitants and many lingered there until they heard the result of the naval battle on the 11th of September.

The British poured into Plattsburg from the northwest past Halsey's Corners, later bringing artillery by the lake shore road, and occupied all of the town to the north and west of the river on the 6th of September. On the south and east side of the river was the armed camp of the Americans with numerous batteries and redoubts. General Macomb was a real soldier and worked day and night to prepare the fortifications. He put details of soldiers at work on the earthworks, stating that those who built a redoubt should defend it. This made them work the more effectively. When he finally took his stand, he declared his intention to hold the works or die in their defence; he said his purpose was to hold the position or blow it up with all its military stores. All his officers

and men stood by him, though he offered the privilege of withdrawing to any who might choose to accept.

After arrival at Plattsburg, Prevost continued to harry Downie, sending couriers to him constantly, until finally Downie was driven into action with his flagship still unready, but with an agreement on Prevost's part to start the land battle on a grand scale as soon as the fleet was in position. Macdonough's preparations were also incomplete. For several days the British assaulted the American land positions and tried the bridges and fords in vain. Breaking across at one point, they were soon driven back. As showing the high state of discipline of the British regiments, it is related that a detachment of British marching to the upper bridge found the planks torn up and only stringers left, upon which, no order to halt being given, the men marched, and from which they were dropped into the water by American marksmen concealed in the woods on the farther side. For several days both sides battered each other with the cumbersome cannon of that time. A battery was placed on an elevation back of Sailly's house and for days it hammered away at a stone building on the other side; this building suffered so little that it stood as a useful structure for many years afterward.

Prevost's calculations went astray in two particulars—in the presence of Macdonough and that of Macomb with their own fortunes and those of the country at stake. When Downie rounded Cumberland Head, he and his officers were disconcerted by not hearing the thunder of Prevost's guns in general assault. Downie was killed and the battle lost before Prevost's eyes and to the latter's great astonishment. Prevost had depended on water supremacy to support his advance and, if he could have divided Macomb's attention and fire with the British ships after the latter had defeated Macdonough, he certainly would have driven the Americans back and probably have captured their supplies and many of their troops. Even with the loss of his ships there was no impregnable barrier for such a powerful force as Prevost commanded on land. But on the afternoon of the battle Prevost hurriedly abandoned a well-fortified position and a town which could in a few days have been made thoroughly British. The surrounding territory would not have chafed exceedingly at being bound to the open and favorable markets of Canada. A redoubt at Cumberland Head with one on the Grand Isle shore, and a force at Plattsburg overrunning the country, would have thoroughly blocked the northern part of the lake to the Americans and have moved the boundary as far south as Plattsburg and perhaps much farther.

Prevost's decision, after the result of the battle was known, was made so quickly as to indicate that he planned in advance of the engagement what he would do in the contingency. He left with a light escort early in the afternoon. The advance guard was in motion soon afterward and by daybreak of the 12th the rearguard was on its way. The inhabitants began to return immediately. Sailly came back at once, bringing his books and papers, set the custom house in operation again and helped his neighbors reestablish the civil authority.

It was after he had returned to his dismantled home, when he was walking in the woods back of his house, that he is said to have discovered the family clock, of the grandfather variety, where it had been left by marauders. As the story is told he heard the clock striking, as though to make its whereabouts known, the sounding apparatus probably having been set in operation by disturbance of the underbrush.

VIII

THE ZEALOUS AND DISCRIMINATING OFFICIAL

In a letter written by Sailly to Major Bleecker, deputy quartermaster general, the date of which has not been preserved, but evidently written immediately after the battle, is information showing the disordered state of the supplies due to quantities of goods and material having been used to strengthen the redoubts while hostilities were in progress at Plattsburg (appendix XV). Shortly after, another letter on the same subject was written to Colonel Jenkins, the quartermaster general (appendix XVI). On October 20th the distressing information was communicated to General Macomb by Store-keeper Sailly that the supply of whiskey would not last more than thirty-five days, and at the same time some good advice was given to the general in command as to the economical use and procurement of supplies (appendix XVII). On October 25, 1814, the customs side of the situation received attention in a suggestion as to military assistance in law enforcement and the collector took shrewd advantage of General Macomb's elevation to the rank of major general to insist on an appraisal as to destruction of fences of inhabitants. It is fair to assume that so gallant an officer promptly acceded to the wish of so witty an official (appendix XVIII).

After the battle of Plattsburg there was a great and increasing importation of cattle into Canada. They were taken from the Black river district and came across Lake Champlain from Vermont, some also going direct from Vermont and New Hampshire. The British

contractors were paying from 10 to 12 dollars a hundredweight for beef. Provisions and forage were also going across the line and the collector was powerless to stop the exportation. The smugglers were very bold and successful and the customs officers were not protected by adequate laws. Saily told the Government that he could not stop the flood of goods under the laws as they stood.

On one occasion a row boat was pursued through Lake Champlain and its cargo of about \$8000 worth of merchandise was located in a store at Whitehall and seized. The owners, aided by armed citizens of Whitehall, retook the goods, and in the affray two of the revenue men were seriously injured. Naval officers guarding the British war vessels, captured in September and lying at Whitehall, stood by and saw this outrage perpetrated without protest, on the plea that their power did not extend to the land. One of the naval officers struck the customs inspector over the head with a musket and, as reported by Collector Saily, "with all the energetic swearing of a sailor damned revenue boats and revenue men and wished the smugglers would destroy them all."

The situation was made worse by uncertainties in decisions as to powers of customs officers, and altogether the devil seemed in a fair way to get away with the exciseman. Soon after the war, however, many of the restrictions on trade with Canada were removed and conditions improved somewhat; but the duties on imports were still sufficiently high to stimulate contraband trade. Commerce was active on Lake Champlain and from ten to twenty vessels arrived at Plattsburg daily.

There is no hint of official criticism by the treasury department of any of Saily's acts except once, in 1815, when Thomas Schieffelin of New York was importing tea received in Montreal from England. Saily claimed a 60 cent a pound duty, while Schieffelin claimed as a direct importation at 48 cents, and asked Saily to request for him a remission of the 12 cents difference. The acting comptroller of the treasury complained in a letter to Saily, saying: "It is astonishing to me how much by your late letters you seem to lean in favor of the Canadian merchants." This brought a rejoinder of a very emphatic nature, a letter in which the collector said: "Sir, this is the first time I have been reproached with being under the influence of an improper bias. I lean only in favor of the public interests and the conclusion you draw from the tenor of my letters is incorrect. Notwithstanding the offensive expression you have thought fit to use in writing to me, my official conduct is the

same now as that which has obtained, heretofore, the approbation of preceding officers of your department. It would be 'astonishing' to the public on this lake and to the merchants in Montreal to hear that I am censured by the officers of the treasury department for leaning improperly any way. They are, I flatter myself, under a very different impression." The acting comptroller does not appear to have pursued the subject.

Sailly was so rigid in the enforcement of the law that even his own subordinates felt his strictness and merchants imported through other districts where officials were more pliant. Along the line in Canada were stores where British goods were on sale much cheaper than in the United States. In Vermont the customs officers were allowed to purchase in these stores necessities for their own use. This practice Sailly refused to sanction in the Champlain district.

Another instance of Sailly's strictness was regarding importations under the claim that goods were the property of neutrals residing in the United States. Sailly required strict proof, as there was a chance for evasion of duties under this claim. So merchants systematically avoided the Champlain district with this class of entries and entered such goods where greater laxity prevailed.

The winter of 1816-17 was one of great distress on account of failure of crops. The summer of 1816 was phenomenally cold in its early part and drouth followed, no appreciable rain falling until the 10th of October. At the same time money was scarcer in Clinton county than it had been for twenty-five years. In the southeastern part of lower Canada the wheat crop was good and a bushel of their wheat, larger than ours, was sold at \$2. People went in from the Champlain district and brought out wheat on which Sailly wished to exact no duty on account of the general need. In January 1817, he wrote to the treasury department: "Under the particularly distressed condition of the country, I have not noticed these importations and have taken no duty on the wheat. I have acted from motives and feelings to which, no doubt, you are no stranger. If I have done wrong, you will let me know it by return of mail, but if the state of things I have endeavored to describe justified, in some measure, that deviation from the law, I shall expect no answer." But the treasury department was inexorable and required the payment of the duties.

When nonintercourse came into effect, the supply of Canadian salt was cut off. The price was \$2.50 a hundredweight one winter, double the usual value, and it was introduced into Vermont where

the customs were enforced with greater laxity and thence into Clinton and Essex counties. Saily wrote the treasury department: "Salt is not to be got fairly here, but from the seaport, at an immense expense. Perhaps it would not be amiss to be not too scrutinizing when it reaches us from the state of Vermont. It is a delicate question. It would be improper to ask your opinion upon it—but salt is an indispensable article and the nonintercourse may last long." No notice being taken of this, the collector failed to scrutinize too closely.

On one occasion, a new inspector reported with some pride the seizure of an unimportant article which a farmer had unintentionally failed to declare. The benevolent collector replied, as is related: "You did very right. If I had seen the little parcel I would have done as you did, but my eyes are growing old and I fear I could not have seen so small a thing."

When Saily first entered on the duties of his office, Canadians used to bring their grists to the New York millers and to take back their flour without the payment of duty. Writing for instructions and receiving none, he let the practice continue until increasing business induced him to exact duty on the tolls taken by the millers. Some of the millers became dissatisfied and complained to the department stating that duty was paid on all the grain and on the tolls besides. The treasury department ordered that the Canadian farmers be required to pay duty on all the grain brought over. The millers had misrepresented the collector's conduct in the matter, but he argued the department into withdrawing the instructions.

The line store was a thorn in the flesh of Collector Saily. Sometimes the line passed through the store and sometimes there were two stores, one on each side of the boundary, operating together; sometimes also the store was situated in Canada close to the line. Saily had an extended series of battles with these contraband dealers and in the long run usually came off victorious.

The steamboats on Lake Champlain were another vexation to Collector Saily. The first boat on the lake began running in 1809. During the war, the idea had evidently occurred to Collector Saily and Commodore Macdonough of mounting cannon on a steamer and then going around the lake killing off the British wind-jammers. But the steamboat of that day was left for peaceful commercial duties and apparently for the promotion of smuggling as well; although Governor Tompkins, probably at the instance of Saily and Macdonough, in March 1814, urged the arming of a steamboat

then building at Vergennes (Military Papers of Tompkins, 3: 457). In 1812-13 steam transportation had been used for the moving of troops and military supplies. If this vessel at Vergennes had been armed, the invasion of Prevost might never have taken place and she would have antedated by several months the first steam frigate, the *Demologos*, designed by Fulton, which was launched at New York in October 1814.

The steamboats running to and from St Johns had every facility for contraband trade and evidently improved every opportunity. Saily was strict, and early incurred the enmity of their managers, whose energies were consequently often directed to attempts to secure his removal from office. Once Saily's inspectors were driven from the boat, but a personal visit from the Collector himself as well as a threat to stop the boat at Cumberland Head on every trip and make a personal inspection himself prevented further open opposition. The steamboat people procured the passage of a law permitting them to clear and enter their boats either in the Champlain or the Vermont district; after that entries and clearances were made in Vermont, where the regulations and the administration of the law were too lax to protect the Government. In 1819, the treasury department awoke to a realization of how the Government was being defrauded on the boats and, by concert between the two collectors, regulations were framed to prevent the system of smuggling which was being carried on. It was in 1819 that the steamboat manager charged Saily with misconduct in connection with Astor's furs, before referred to, which charge was immediately dissipated by Astor himself.

In 1820 a law was passed fixing the term of office of collectors at four years and making all their terms expire, beginning with the end of the current year. Saily was reappointed in 1821 and again in 1825.

In 1824 business in the northern customs districts fell off greatly. Saily attributed the decrease in his district to higher duties under the new tariff and to the opening of the Champlain canal.

IX

CHARACTER AND CHARACTERISTICS

Saily was deemed to be rather stern in mien and manner, as may be gathered from an instance that has been handed down. A little girl, who was later married to a grandson of Saily, used to pass his house on her way to school, but in fear and trembling at

what she considered his fierce visage; while he made the matter worse, when he happened to be out in advance of her, by speaking to her in a manner intended to be friendly. He was really of a very kind and benevolent disposition.

Sailly was a firm opponent of the extension of slavery and in 1820 he said, in a letter to Congressman Ezra C. Gross: "I thank you for the pamphlet you have had the politeness to send me. Your speech on the Missouri question does honor to your head and heart and although slavery is to be admitted into that new state contrary to and in contempt of every republican principle, yet we have the satisfaction to know that yourself and almost every representative of this State have done their duty in opposing that wicked measure." In 1790, out of 21,324 slaves in New York State, it is said that 17 resided in Clinton county; in 1800 the number in the county had increased to 58 and then gradually decreased, until in 1810 there were 29. In 1808 Sailly manumitted a female slave, called Dean, and her three children, Francis, Abel and Caty.

Although reared a Roman Catholic he failed to set great store by ecclesiastical forms and he was by no means a churchman. However, he never attached himself seriously to any other church. He contributed liberally to the building of the Presbyterian church in Plattsburg and owned a pew in it.

He was a strict Sabbatarian and reproved desecration of the day. The following story is related: One fine Sunday morning the salmon were observed at the mouth of the Saranac and John Louis Fouquet, a friend and countryman of Sailly, called his boatman and embarked, rowing toward the lower island in the mouth of the river and paying out his seine. Sailly, who had noticed the coordination in the movements of the salmon and his friend's boat, walked rapidly down the bank and stopping opposite called out, "Louis, Louis, je suis etonné! Ne savez vous pas que c'est dimanche?" Fouquet gathered in his net and returned to land without the salmon.

Another incident, handed down by word of mouth for nearly a century, shows his family pride in his little grandson, Peter Sailly Palmer. They had egg rollings at the Sailly home, at Easter, apparently rolling the eggs down a board into sand or sawdust. Grandfather Sailly put a coin in the soft material and little Peter, finding it, faithfully brought it to his grandsire, who could not forbear patting the lad and calling attention to his early probity.

Sailly remained in harness to the very end and his last illness was very short, scarcely more than a few hours intervening between

the regular discharge of his official duties and his death. His funeral was that of an honored public character and the time of its occurrence was observed by the merchants of the place. In the village paper was printed a notice that the hour of the funeral would be observed publicly and in a yellowed copy of this paper which survives is a written notation that this was done, apparently made at the time. He died March 16, 1826 and his remains were interred in Riverside Cemetery, Plattsburg, his grave being marked by a simple stone, the inscription on which is given at the end of the appendix (XXI).

An able characterization based on direct personal contact with Saily survives to us in the form of a letter from Reuben H. Walworth, the chancellor, who was his intimate, personal, business and political friend, and who, in 1866, wrote a letter to Judge Palmer, which is found in appendix XX. Chancellor Walworth describes him as intelligent, well educated and strong minded, of unquestionable courage, of stern, unbending integrity, a polished gentleman, a good neighbor, a faithful friend and one almost idolized by his family and relatives.

APPENDIXES I-XXI

1st of June 1861

Dear Mr. [illegible]

I have the honor to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 28th inst.

and in reply to inform you that the same has been forwarded to the proper authorities.

I am, Sir, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

[illegible signature]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

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I

A passport of Peter Saily

De par Le Roy

A tous Gouverneurs et nos Lieutenans
Généraux en nos Provinces et Armées, Gouverneurs
particuliers et Commandans de nos Villes, Places
et Troupes, et à tous autres nos Officiers, Justiciers et
Sujets qu'il appartiendra. Salut. Nous voulons et
vous mandons très expressément que vous ayiez à laisser
librement passer le S. Pierre de Saily allant de Paris
dans l'Amérique septentrionale
sans lui donner ou souffrir qu' il lui soit donné aucun
empêchement; le présent passeport valable pour trois mois
seulement. Car tel est notre plaisir.

Donné à Versailles le 27. Novembre 1784.

LOUIS

Par Le Roy

De Vergennes.

Gratis

II

Diary of Peter Saily on a Journey in America in the Year 1784

1784, May 11.—I arrived at Philadelphia.

May 14.—Left Philadelphia to examine the iron works near Newark; accompanied by the proprietor.

May 17.—I left Newark to visit Mr Faesch, the proprietor of the iron works at his house. Left there on the 18th for New York, where I arrived the same day.

May 19.—I embarked on the Hudson river for Albany, by the way of Poughkeepsie, with the intention of exploring the interior of the country.

May 20.—We arrived within view of West Point; a large fort, where the Americans had their principal forces during the late war. The tide and the wind being adverse, we were obliged to anchor. I profited by the delay to examine this locality, celebrated both from its position, which renders it almost impregnable and from the treason of General Arnold. To reach the first fort on the south, I ascended, with great labor, a mountain and some very large rocks. I found the mountain covered with walnut trees, and fragrant with roses, aromatic herbs and wild vines in blossom. I had scarcely reached the summit, and was within fifty paces of the fort, when the captain made the signal to leave, which obliged me to descend the mountain in haste and not without danger. In ascending, as we passed around the forts and redoubts I counted ten *terre-pleins* upon the heights, where the sides are nearly impracticable. The Hudson river, a magnificent stream, runs through a deep channel between two chains of high mountains. The mountains are not cultivated and can not be.

May 20.—I landed at Poughkeepsie, where I expected to find Mr Dejong, a gentleman I had seen in New York, and who intended to be my traveling companion.

May 21.—This day at Poughkeepsie, a small and pleasant village, but the environs of which are not very pleasing, with the exception of the country seat of Mr Livingston, which is upon the borders of the river, in a most charming location. I forgot to notice, that I passed in sight of two villages between West Point and Poughkeepsie, called New Windsor and Newburgh; but they did not equal the smallest villages in France.

May 22.—I left Poughkeepsie for Albany in company with Mr Dezong on horseback.¹ The country between these two places is fine and well cultivated. We passed three small villages. The roads were very good.

May 23.—Arrived at Albany which is 84 miles from Poughkeepsie and 168 miles, or 56 French leagues from New York. Here the valley enlarges and presents a charming appearance. Albany, situate upon the North or Hudson river, is a flourishing village, very advantageously located, particularly for the fur trade with the Indians.

May 24.—This day at Albany, where I had several letters of introduction to deliver.

May 25.—Left Albany for Schenectady, by the way of the falls of the Mohawk. These falls are sixty feet high, and present a most magnificent appearance. Schenectady is eighteen miles from Albany. It is a pleasant village with fine houses upon the banks of the Mohawk river. It numbers about 450 inhabitants. The country is beautiful along the Mohawk from a point six miles above the falls to Schenectady.

May 26.—Left Schenectady for Johnstown, about twenty-four miles distant, and five miles from the Mohawk river. The country between these two villages is indifferently good. The borders of the Mohawk are contracted by the surrounding hills. Johnstown contains sixteen dwellings, a church, court house and jail. The house of General Johnson is one-fourth of a mile from the village. All his property has been confiscated by the state; against which he took part in the late war. The commissioners were at Johnstown to take legal proceedings concerning his property, consisting in this section, of about fifty thousand acres of land and forests. The soil is good about this place. Johnstown is situated upon a small stream which turns several mills, and upon which forges could be built. There are but few fish in the river and game is not abundant.

May 27, Sunday.—We took a walk seven or eight miles in the woods, north of the village. We saw fine oaks and pines from three and one-half to four feet in diameter and sugar maples two and one-half feet.

May 28.—I went about twelve miles from Johnstown, to the house of Madam, the widow Paris, whose husband was killed by

¹ In the time-worn and yellowed original journal of William Gilliland, one of the most romantic and spirited of all the early pioneers in America, is an entry under the year 1784, as follows: "Monsr. Sailly from France, Frederick Augusts. de Zeng, at Poughkeepsie."

the English at the commencement of the late war.¹ He was their terror. This brave man was Colonel of Militia, originally from l'Orient, France, I believe. He has a brother in Philadelphia with whom I am acquainted; and had also many friends in Nantes. His widow has a mill in good condition, but it lacks water. She manufactures potash. Near her residence we passed through a section of country called "Stone Arabia." It is one of the finest sections I have seen in America. The cultivated land is about eight miles in length by two miles in width and lies upon an elevated plain along the immense forests which border upon the Mohawk. The soil is fertile and the inhabitants will be prosperous if they do not again undergo the evils of war, from which they have suffered by the loss of their houses and cattle, stolen and burned by the Indians. They have since then built a small fort into which they can retreat in case of any new incursion, if peace does not render the tardy precaution unnecessary.

May 29.—Colonel Melcher, Captain Dejong and myself left Johnstown with the intention of visiting Fort Stanwix and the Indians of Lake Oneida. We purpose to sleep at German Flats, a section celebrated in North America for its beauty and the richness of its soil. The valley here expands and forms a beautiful plain, which the Mohawk river divides in the center. A fine stream called Canada creek, traverses a portion of the German Flats and joins its waters with the Mohawk. The inhabitants have suffered more from the late war than in other sections, as their neighbors, the Indians, have treated them with greater severity, having burned their houses, stolen their cattle and brought other misfortunes upon them. It would seem that Nature itself were in league with the enemy to desolate the country, for the land, naturally fertile, has been unproductive the present year. The most beautiful country in the world now presents only the poor cabins of an impoverished population who are nearly without food and upon the verge of starvation. The German Flats are about forty miles from Johnstown.

May 31.—We continued our route toward Fort Stanwix. Our progress being retarded by several events of little interest, we were obliged to sleep in a small Indian village, composed of four or five

¹ Note made by Peter Saily Palmer: Probably Col. Isaac Paris who was a firm and zealous patriot. As chairman of the Tryon county committee of safety he had rendered himself obnoxious to the Tories residing in the Mohawk valley. He was murdered by some of St Leger's Indians about the time of the battle of Oriskany, in 1777.

cabins, and containing between twenty-five and thirty inhabitants. These Indians dwell upon the borders of the Crisque, a branch of the Mohawk. We were received with a cordiality we have not found in any other part of America, and which is not always found in France. They gave us salmon, which they catch in Oneida lake, twenty-four miles higher up, where the main body of the tribe resides. This little tribe, which forms the main part of the Onontagues, one of the Six Nations of Iroquois, numbers about two hundred families. They were the friends of the United States in the late war. The savages gave up to us their beds, which are made of a blanket spread upon a bedstead eighteen inches high. The couch is of the bark of trees. These Indians show nothing of the savage except in dress. Many of them conversed in English with my companions, with as much spirit and ease as we could ourselves assume. I found them much more polite than the peasants of France, who are the most civilized and polished of that class in Europe. We saw several fine and very tall men; one young man of twenty-two years, who was tall and well proportioned, with a most martial figure and address. Few men in Europe are by nature as noble in appearance (*aussi distingués de la nature*). The females are inferior; rendered so by labor, harsh treatment and their unbecoming dress.

Upon the borders of the Crisque General Herkimer gained a battle over the English and their Indian allies, commanded by M. de St Leger, a man of French parentage but born in Ireland. This engagement took place in the woods, while General Herkimer was on his way to relieve Fort Schuyler, then besieged by the English. About four miles before reaching the Indian village we saw Fort Schuyler, which is no more than a rampart of earth, now overgrown with thorns and bushes.

July 1.—Prepared to continue our journey, but the horse of Mr Dezong becoming lame we returned to sleep at German Flats. Col. Melcher continued on. The whole country on both sides of the Mohawk is very fine. The lands are excellent. About five miles above German Flats are immense forests of primitive growth. The ground is covered with old and decayed trees which render the roads difficult. The mosquitoes are extremely troublesome. This section must sometimes become the most beautiful and richest in America. It contains a fertile soil, rich meadows and a great number of lakes and rivers filled with fish.

July 3.—We started to visit Lake Schuyler and several other small lakes in its vicinity. We passed through a forest twenty-four

miles in length from German Flats over a road blocked up, at every step, by fallen trees. At the lake we found the land to be of very inferior quality, if we except the bottom lands, but these latter are exposed to annual inundations during the rainy season. Lake Schuyler is six miles long, in some places two miles wide and in others less than one mile. We passed over it in a canoe, as far as its outlet, which forms part of the Susquehanna river, sixteen miles below. We caught many fine fish in the lake with lines, with which we were provided. On our arrival we let loose our horses on the banks of the lake, but the next day, Sunday, mine could not be found. I think it was stolen by some hunters who were near the lake. The lake is full of fish and two streams of considerable size enter into it, but the land is so level near the lake that it is not possible to construct mills. A small piece of elevated land which we saw at the head of the lake, where there is an old house inhabited and several acres fit for cultivation, presents a favorable place for building a mill. There is not much current, yet, by making a dam to retain the waters about two hundred and fifty paces higher up, a mill could be turned twelve hours during the twenty-four and the dam would cause no further expense.

This is the most favorable section in the world for fishing and the chase. We found in the lake large quantities of pike and perch, and at certain season salmon are caught. Deer, bears and beaver abound in the forest bordering on the lake, and in the surrounding country are to be found partridges, hares and pigeons in great numbers.

On Monday the fifth we started on our return to German Flats, without obtaining any information about my horse. We visited an ancient Indian village while descending the Mohawk. This is a fine section and the lands are of better quality. Mills and forges can be built upon a large stream which traverses the country and empties into the Mohawk. We continued our route for Johnstown, where were the commissioners of the State, who propose to make a road to an iron ore mine upon a mountain near the borders of the Mohawk. Certain points upon this river present advantageous sites for forges. There is but little commerce upon the Mohawk. The inhabitants are poor since the war. It is nevertheless a desirable location as this part of America will soon be thickly peopled. The rich lands will attract settlers. A merchant here can only sell in exchange for grain and peltries. With both of these he can do well in New York. Wheat can not be sold as it is received. It

must be made into flour. New York then receives it for her own consumption and for shipment to the Islands [West Indies]. It is of great importance to a merchant on the Mohawk that he own a mill, some land, a house and a little stock. With these he can carry on a very good business.

July 7.—I returned to Fort Henry, twenty-four miles from Johnstown, upon the Mohawk, to purchase some excellent lands, but I could not agree with the proprietors as to the terms.

July 10.—Arrived at Albany.

July 11, Sunday.—I saw Mr Gilliland who owns lands upon Lake Champlain. As the price and terms of payment were satisfactory, and the lands were represented to be very good, I determined to look at them. Mr Gilliland could not leave until Thursday the 15th, and the same night we slept at Saratoga; a locality celebrated in America from the surrender of General Burgoyne with an army of seven thousand men to the American General Gates. We saw the encampments of the two generals and the ground where two battles were fought between them. Saratoga is twenty-four miles from Albany and comprises a great extent of territory, but little cultivated. General Schuyler has a large farm upon the borders of the North river. A small and rapid stream empties near his house upon which he has built several mills. There are a number of mills along the borders of the North river. The land in this section is of poor quality.

July 16.—This evening we arrived at Fort Edward where we slept. It is fifty miles from Albany. I visited the fort built upon the borders of the Hudson river. The ruins of the rampart and ditch only remain. The rampart is built of wood and is quite high. The inclosure of the fort is not extensive. I saw beyond the fort a graveyard where were buried the officers and soldiers who died of wounds received in the attack upon Ticonderoga, on Lake Champlain, in 1758, then occupied by the French and forming a part of Canada. At the present day it is within the limits of the State of New York, with the whole of Lake Champlain; the boundaries of the two provinces having been changed at the time the English took possession of Canada. Fort Edward is situated in a fine plain, but the land is poor, as is that which we passed as far north as Fort George, where we arrived on the 17th at noon, distant fourteen miles from Fort Edward. Fort George is built upon the borders of Lake St Sacrament, called by the English Lake George. There we sent back our wagon, and prepared to

embark as soon as the wind was favorable. We visited Fort George, which is yet in good repair. It is built of stone and is of difficult approach. The English captured it from the Americans during the late war. The garrison capitulated and should have been conducted to Fort Edward, but in violation of their promises, and to the eternal disgrace of the English, they posted their troops upon the passage the poor Americans were to take and massacred them all.¹ There is on the borders of Lake George an old fort of earth, built by the English and called William Henry. It was taken by the French under General Montcalm.

July 18, Sunday.—I went to the lake and caught two fish, called by the English "black fish," which were of fine size and very good. In the afternoon I visited Fort William Henry, but could only see the remains of the old ramparts of earth. They were covered with wild cherry trees. The cherries, now ripe, are small and red and more tart than the wild cherries of France. There were here a great number of small birds of different kinds. I discovered for the first time that some of them resembled in every particular the little thrush of France. A little above the fort is a level place where we yet see the remains of an entrenched camp. There is in the center a graveyard where are buried about one thousand officers and soldiers, victims of a large battle which was fought there. The graves are covered with strawberries and wild roses, which are here very abundant, notwithstanding the poor quality of the soil.

July 19, Monday.—We left in a canoe at three o'clock. Our progress was delayed by a head wind. We slept in a cabin upon the borders of the lake, about twenty-five miles from Fort George and seven from the lower end of the lake, which is thirty-one and three-fourths miles long. On each side of the lake are high mountains covered with rocks on which were some pines, some cedars and thickets of thorns. The soil is sterile. The water of the lake is very clear, and the lake is well filled with fish. We ate of them during our whole voyage.

July 20.—We landed and took a wagon which brought us to Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain which we visited. It is one of the most famous places in America. It is situated upon an elevated plain with double ramparts of very high and strong walls of stone.

¹ Note interpolated by Peter Saily Palmer: Mr Saily has confounded the massacre of the English garrison of Fort William Henry by the Indians under Montcalm in 1757, with the abandonment of Fort George, twenty years afterwards. The latter was a bloodless affair, as the American troops evacuated the fort before the English had reached the upper end of the lake.

It was built by the French, who called it Fort Carillon. We saw the retrenchments of the French and English armies in the vicinity. This frontier place was always the theater of war. The English were beaten in an attack upon the French camp of General Montcalm. Fort Independence is directly opposite. The Americans in the late war built a bridge across the lake which separates Mount Independence from Ticonderoga. We saw its remains. We also saw the ruins of several batteries, which the French erected to guard the entrance of the lake. During the wars there were flotillas on Lake Champlain composed of vessels, some of which carried twenty-four guns.

The same day at night we embarked on board a vessel for Crown Point, a fort built by the French fifteen miles below and which they called Fort Frederic. Head winds obliged us to cast anchor and we passed the night on board. The next day (the 21st) the wind continuing unfavorable we returned to Ticonderoga, which gave me an opportunity to examine the environs and the batteries which were built upon the borders of the lake. There are a great many redoubts in the neighborhood. The French were not parsimonious in fortifying this section. The nature of the ground was also favorable. We can yet see the ruins of the houses of the French inhabitants. These ruins are now better than the poor cabins, which the Americans, poorer still, have built here.

July 22.—I arose at two o'clock in the morning and finding the wind favorable, I called the captain of the sloop and we set sail at three o'clock. We arrived at Crown Point at eight in the morning. This fort, built by the English, is fifteen miles from Ticonderoga. It is very strong from its position and is larger than Fort Ticonderoga, but is not in repair. The ramparts are of earth and wood. I inspected all the vicinity about the fort. Crown Point is situated upon a point of land at the commencement of the lake and near to Fort St Frederic, which has fallen into ruins. The rocks are of the color of slate and well adapted to make into lime.

We left Crown Point about noon of the same day and visited an iron ore bed of very rich quality, which Mr Gilliland has upon Lake Champlain about five miles north of Crown Point. I took with me several pieces of the ore. There is a small stream of water near the bed where they can build a furnace. The fall of water is very great. The wind being contrary we were obliged to return and we slept within two miles of Crown Point, on the east side of the lake.

The next day, the 23d, the wind continuing to blow we returned to Crown Point where I revisited the fort and the environs. The English built three large ranges of barracks within their fort, which can conveniently lodge two thousand men.

July 24.—The wind being favorable we embarked and continued our journey, visiting the lands of Mr Gilliland on our route. The districts of Willsborough, Janesborough and Cumberland Head contain fertile wheat lands of easy culture.¹

In general I have never in my life seen anything which approaches in beauty the borders of Lake Champlain, although they are uninhabited. On the east side of the lake there is a very fine plain, ten leagues in width. The lake is as many miles wide at some places and sometimes a great deal less. We can see for fifteen leagues along the length of the lake. If this section is ever inhabited, it will be the finest in the world. The best lands are sold from fifteen to eighteen francs per acre. I would not hesitate to purchase if I was not afraid that in the first war with the English the inhabitants of Lake Champlain would be their first victims. They have forts upon the borders of the lake at Point Au Fer and again at Isle Aux Noix. The Americans, on the contrary, have not a redoubt in serviceable condition, nor a soldier to protect the inhabitants on their frontier. Indeed, the savages or English could burn or ravage forty or fifty leagues of country before even a poor army could be collected to oppose them. We arrived at Isle Aux Noix on the morning of the 25th, much fatigued, after passing a stormy and wet night.

Isle Aux Noix is five leagues from St Johns, the extremity of the lake. There are four forts on the island, although it does not contain more than three hundred and sixty acres. Three of the forts are not garrisoned. The land here is fertile and the lake well filled with fish. The fever attacked me the day of my arrival. I allowed Mr Gilliland to return and, finding a good opportunity to visit Montreal, I decided to go there. From the night of the 25th to the night of the 27th the fever did not leave me, although it was

¹ Note interpolated under this date by Peter Saily Palmer: Willsborough lay on both sides of the Boquet river and Janesborough at the mouth of the Salmon river. Mr Gilliland's claim to Cumberland Head was based upon the purchase of the claim of Lieutenant Abram Lowe to 2000 acres of land. At the time of Mr Saily's visit Mr Gilliland was urging this claim before the commissioners of the state land office; it was rejected. The claim of Mr Gilliland to other large tracts of land on Lake Champlain and to the ore bed near Crown Point was not recognized by the State.

not very violent. I attribute this fever to the great fatigue I have undergone for the last six weeks. A head wind delayed our departure for Montreal which is thirteen leagues from Isle Aux Noix.

July 27.—We left Isle Aux Noix for St Johns at six o'clock in the evening in a small canoe. We landed at St Johns at half past eleven o'clock at night. I was so much annoyed by the fever I would have laid down had the size of the vessel permitted. The slightest movement would cause the miserable overloaded pirogue to roll from side to side. At length, on landing I had the misfortune to fall into the water, shoulders deep. This aggravated the fever, which tormented me cruelly all of the night. St Johns is a fort at the entrance of Lake Champlain, occupied by the English. Here navigation terminates as the river is rapid for five or six leagues below. The river empties into the St Lawrence thirteen leagues below Montreal. Here the mail, baggage &c are carried into the government storehouse where they are examined to prevent the importation of foreign merchandise into Canada. St Johns is a place of considerable size. The land is of middling quality.

July 28.—We took a small carriage with two places, here called a calash, and went to La Prairie, upon the banks of the River St Lawrence, opposite Montreal, and seven leagues from St Johns. The country between these places is very flat and is well inhabited. The wheat, which is sown throughout Canada in the spring, is very fine but yet green. The whole country is cultivated. We saw no woods. The approach to Montreal is very fine, affording a view of the beautiful valley through which the St Lawrence runs. Several mountains are seen in the distance, upon whose summits, covered with beautiful groves, the eyes of the weary traveler can repose with delight. At length, a short distance from La Prairie de la Madeleine we saw Montreal, stretching along the bank of the river, at the foot of a mountain. Here again a most beautiful picture is produced by the borders of the River St Lawrence, covered with houses as far as the eye can reach. The villages, the fine churches, the cultivated fields, the surrounding country, the most level I have ever seen, the city itself with its steeples and towers scattered here and there, and the pastures covered with cattle, present a most charming *coup d'oeil*. The view is magnificent.

At La Prairie de la Madeleine we embarked in a bateau for Montreal. The river here is at least one league and a half in

width. We passed over the rapids. At this point the river ceases to be navigable for the largest vessels, until we reach fifteen or twenty leagues higher up, when it again assumes its magnificent size. We arrived at Montreal in the evening of the 28th, where we remained the 29th, and on the 30th left for Sorel, with the intention of visiting the lands of Mr Ross, upon the River Ya Maska. We arrived at Sorel on the 30th, at ten o'clock at night. It is fifteen leagues from Montreal. It is a depot for artillery. The soldiers have barracks here. Sorel is only a village. It has a church. All the inhabitants here were originally French, as they were in all the Canadas. The village is situate on the bank of the St Lawrence, at the outlet of a considerable stream here called the Sorel, higher up the Chambly river, still higher up the St Johns, and at length the Ourlet of Lake Champlain, which flows into the River St Lawrence.

The country between Montreal and Sorel is very good, very level and more thickly inhabited than any other part of Canada that I have seen. After crossing the St Lawrence at Montreal, we passed the seignory of Longueuil, where there is a priest and a church. Two leagues below is Boucherville, a small village pleasantly situated upon the borders of the river. Two leagues below is Varennes, a considerable village, where they have just built a very pretty church, more adorned than those in the small villages of France. The altar attracts attention from the delicacy of the work and the variety of its decorations. Farther on is Verchere, another large seignory thickly settled. After these succeed Contrecoeur and St Ours. All of these large seignories are upon the east bank of the St Lawrence river, as far down as Sorel. These are only the largest villages. Besides these are the houses of the farmers all along the river, three arpents distant from each other. This is because the seignors in Canada grant their lands in lots three arpents in front by thirty arpents in depth, which makes a farm sufficiently large and causes all their lands to be peopled. It appears as if there was a continuous village along the margin of the river. The opposite bank of the river presents the same appearance, and it is the same as far as Quebec.

August 2, Sunday.—This day at Sorel.

August 3.—We left the next day in a wagon for the river Ya Maska, four leagues distant from the Sorel river. We arrived at Maska in good time, notwithstanding the bad roads. There we took a canoe, in which we ascended the river to the seignory of

Mr Ross, which is yet uninhabited. It is two leagues from the church at Maska. The borders of this river present throughout a charming appearance; a fine level country, fertile and thickly peopled and a beautiful river. We reached the seignory of Mr Ross, which is three leagues in width on the river and three leagues in depth. The trees are very fine and of good quality; a great many maples (a sugar tree), some oak and pine and some elm. The land is excellent. The only inconvenience is the great number of mosquitoes.

August 4, Tuesday.—We slept at Maska after having examined a great part of the seignory extending along the little river Chibonet, upon which a mill has been built, now in ruins. On Wednesday I returned to Sorel, and the same day left in a canoe and ascended the river as far as Chambly, fourteen leagues distant. This river, which empties from Lake Champlain, is a little larger than the Ya Maska. It waters a fine country, level, fertile and thickly settled as far as the borders of the River St Lawrence. The two banks of this river present two lines of houses. We have passed fourteen leagues up and have found, since we left Sorel, the seignories of St Ours, St Denis, St Antoine, St Charles, Bel-Oeil and Chambly. In each there is a church and a priest. The churches are about two and a half leagues distant from each other.

We arrived at Chambly on Thursday. There is a large fort here and a garrison. Here commence the rapids which obstruct the navigation as far as St Johns. Some mills have been built upon the rapids. The same day we left Chambly for St Johns in a calash. We saw several small dams which the Indians had made in the rapids, where the water was shallow, to catch eels, which are to be had at this season. They barricade the river and leave at certain places small holes where they place willow nets. The eels descending the rapid current are forced into the nets, from whence they can not escape. These fish bring a good deal to the Indians, who sell them.

August 7, Friday.—We arrived at St Johns, which I had no opportunity to examine the first time I was here. The forts are extensive. The English have at this place, which is the entrance into the lake, several vessels of war of 18, 20 and 24 guns. The same day we slept at Isle Aux Noix.

August 8th and 9th we remained here and left on the 10th. We slept in the woods in a miserable house that had been abandoned. It was about seven leagues from Isle Aux Noix.

August 11.—We continued our route notwithstanding the wind and slept on an uninhabited island.

August 12.—We continued our route notwithstanding the wind which was against us, and this day made about twenty-five miles. We stopped at the River Boquet, which we ascended about two miles, in a canoe, to the place where Mr Gilliland had a mill. We caught four salmon. The next day we dined at Crown Point and slept at Ticonderoga.

August 14.—Left Ticonderoga and reached Lake George before noon.

August 16.—Arrived at Albany, where I found my horse, but in a very bad condition.

August 17.—This day at Albany.

August 18.—Left Albany for New York by water.

August 20.—Arrived at Poughkeepsie.

August 21.—I saw upon the borders of the North river, about two miles from Newburgh, a mine of coal which they have commenced to work. I took several specimens.¹

August 22.—We passed West Point. The wind having been contrary from the commencement, we are borne slowly along by the stream.²

¹ Referring to slate rock formation in Orange county, the third annual Geological Report of New York, page 113 (Doctor Horton) says: In very many places in the county this rock is loaded with carbon, so much so as to deceive the inexperienced eye into the belief that it is coal . . . Mining for coal in a small way has been undertaken in several places.

² Here the journal terminates abruptly.

III

Letter from Mr "St John" to Zephaniah Platt at Plattsburg, introducing Peter Saily.

New York June 14, 1785.

DEAR SIR:

This letter will be delivered to you by Mr Saily a French Gent'm to whom I can freely give that name he is Going to settle in & deserves all your Esteem & Friendship & he wants to Purchase Land. he has brought over with him his wife & a good one she is & some children. do Pray let me beg of Judge Platt to show this Good Man every kindness & Good counsel he may stand in need of; you will thereby gain one Good Neighbor and do an action worthy of a good American.

IV

Letter from Madame Saily, Written at Albany, to her Mother-in-law in France.¹

1 December 1785. My dear Maman: I have just received your letter which has given me great pleasure. My husband can not write you as he is absent for the whole winter. My dear Maman, all our misfortune can not change the love I feel for all those that belong to my husband and my hope is to secure our reunion. It does not require riches to live in this country, and we have all that is necessary for existence. An immense sea separates us, but it does not prevent our thinking of you and always with tenderness both for my dear mother-in-law and all that belongs to her. I assure you we talk often of you with our poor Marianne. All our children send their respects, especially our little Julia, who you know is so sensible. We can not talk before her of Grandmaman or of Aunt Sybille or of my sister without she bursts into tears. If you could see how she loves her father! She often says to him, "Papa, if we only had Grandma with us she would have coffee whenever she wished it." Here sugar does not cost a high price (that is brown sugar). Besides we use a great deal of tea, which is the beverage of the country. The price of coffee is also very reasonable and of that we use a great deal. In conclusion I repeat, my dear Maman, if you can afford your passage and that of dear Sybille, you may be assured to pass your life in tranquility. You will have to see the Indians, but they are civilized and all are Catholics. Adieu, my dear Maman.

P. S.—Marianne wishes to present her respects. She is uneasy at not having received news of her mother.

¹The writer of this letter was the first Madame Saily. The Marianne referred to in it was the writer's companion, Marianne Adelaide Grellier, who afterward became the second Madame Saily. The letter is in French, unsigned.

V

Extract from a Letter Written by Peter Saily to Judge William Bailey, Dated May 25, 1806, Respecting the First Post Road between Plattsburg and Ogdensburg

A Post road has been established by law beginning at Harrisburgh, through Williamstown, Ogdensburgh, Lisbon, Stockholm and Chateaugay to Plattsburgh. As the contract to carry the mail will be closed in the course of this summer (if proposals are made) I thought it as well to give you time enough to consult with the inhabitants about the proper places for Post Offices and persons to be appointed Deputy Postmasters. It will be best however to send without much delay the names of those persons and places to the Postmaster General: these to be recommended by a number of reputable inhabitants. If you think a letter from me may be of any service I will cheerfully join it to the nomination, with this proviso, that among the subscribers of the said nominations, there will be from every town where a Post Office is to be established, some respectable republicans; in order that it may not be a party business, but that the petition or letter to the Postmaster General may express the wishes of the community generally. For the accomplishment of that object (if my name is to be made use of) I must rely on your candor, and I do appoint you the keeper of my political reputation in that respect, believing that it will be more tenderly used than it has been by a few demo-aristocrats here, who by insidious practices have raised a sort of hue and cry against me in this County.

You will observe that there are but few places mentioned in the law establishing your postroad. This I have thought best to do as the inhabitants are left at liberty to direct the road, from either of those specified points, where they'll think it more generally useful, by recommending Post Offices in towns and places between those points, paying due regard however to as strait a course as possible.

VI

From a Letter Written by Peter Saily after the Election of 1806 Concerning Political Attacks Made upon Him (names of addressee and two other persons mentioned elided by Peter S. Palmer in copying)

I have been an unfortunate prophet, because I have been a true one. Mr N. Z. Platt, a federalist is elected for the Assembly by a majority of upwards of 140 votes..... My reputation as a republican has been slandered by Messrs. and throughout the county. A sort of hue and cry has been raised against me. They said I suffered myself to be a candidate for Congress in order to defeat the election of Judge Thompson. They represented me as a wolf in a flock of sheep. My letter however expressive of my disapprobation of my nomination, and of my assent to the nomination of the County convention of Saratoga, and sent by express at my request through the Counties of Essex and Clinton, which arrived in proper time, gave them the lie. Another letter, to the same effect, published in due time in the Waterford Gazette, shields me sufficiently in that respect from the slanderous attacks of wicked and designing men. Judge Thompson has a majority in Clinton and Essex.

I have heard that since the election those two gentlemen speak of a reconciliation. What can be the terms? Do they think I shall be so neglectful of my reputation as to leave the charges they have themselves wickedly uttered, uncontradicted? Mr Delord has been involved in this vortex of defamation and abuse. says Frenchmen must not any more be trusted by the people. Ungrateful man!

VII

From a Letter Written by Peter Saily to Judge William Bailey after the Former's Return from Service as Congressman

It is not possible within the limits of a letter to explain away the insidious attacks of J. Randolph on the administration, and the misrepresentations respecting the transactions in Congress as stated in the federal papers. I shall always be ready not only to explain verbally, but to prove to any candid man that the views of the government were pure; that the foreign business was conducted with a spirit worthy of the American nation, and not, as has been insinuated with servility, nor under the influence of fear, and I hope time will prove that the measures adopted by Congress this last session were not injudicious.

The neglect of our navy and of our ports is wholly to be attributed to the southern and western members. They rose, in mass, against those objects. The story of the two millions of dollars said to be intended for France is a false one, and indeed, on the most indifferent subjects, as related in the adverse party papers, there are at least two lies for every truth.

I send you the President's message respecting the deeds of the British commanders off New York. They are gone. Mr Pinkney, of Virginia, has been appointed envoy extraordinary to the Court of Great Britain, to join Mr Monroe in the negotiation with that power. On the passage of the partial non-importation act every federalist in Congress voted in the negative, except Mr Quincy Adams of the Senate.

VIII

From a Letter Written by Peter Saily to a Leading Politician in the Tompkins Campaign of 1807 under Date of April 4, 1807 (the name of the addressee not being given in the copy left by Peter S. Palmer)

Mr Lynde seems to think that the republican ticket for Senator and for the Assembly in Essex. (Mr Pond the candidate for the Assembly), will prevail but he has doubts respecting the Governor. We ought to help them as much as we can, and that very soon, before men have committed themselves.

I think the prejudices against Elisha Arnold are subsiding, and I am convinced that if we do our duty, he will be elected. But the republican ticket will not succeed in our county without exertions, and you well know that those exertions must be made by ourselves. We have lost already precious time, which I regret exceedingly. It is full time to awake and to act. I hope the principal men in the republican party will unite cordially in this common danger and endeavor to spirit up the supine and careless. To effect this no time can be spared. I really wish we might confer seriously on that business and agree upon a systematic plan to carry us out with honor, and to some advantage to the cause.

IX

From Letter Written by Peter Saily to the Secretary of the Treasury July 27, 1812

On the 26, 27 and 28 ultimo a considerably quantity of hardware and drygoods, perhaps to the amount of seventy thousand dollars, was put within my reach by merchants of New York, who had imported that merchandise last year from England into Canada. I have taken possession of it and sent the drygoods, at the request of the owner to New York, under charge of an inspector of this district, to be deposited in the public storehouses at that place. I have also, at the request of the owners, requested the District Attorney to libel that merchandise, as a claim will be lodged with the judge for the purpose of regaining its possession by an order of the court, according to law. I have stored the hardware at Whitehall, within this district, the owners being in expectation that a law would be passed for their relief, and therefore did not claim to have the property libeled immediately.

A quantity of merchandise, probably to the amount of three hundred thousand dollars, belonging to American citizens was intended to be introduced in the same manner, and several vessels were already loaded at St Johns, when a limited embargo, laid by the government of Lower Canada on ships and vessels, goods, wares and merchandise and money, prevented their departure.

The British brig of war the Prince Edward, is repairing at St Johns. We have no forces on this lake, nor a battery. The gunboats are out of repair. I am informed by a friend at Washington that the invasion of Canada is not contemplated to take place very soon. We must therefore be here on the defensive. But the British have begun hostilities by taking our fort at Michillmackinac. They may continue where there is a prospect of success. I think the regular troops ought to be near the frontiers, instead of being placed at Albany. Our inhabitants are alarmed and are moving off. There is not a single stand of arms in Vermont, nor a single man ordered to the protection of our frontier.

X

From a Letter Written by Peter Sailly to Quartermaster General, June 11, 1813

Since the loss of two of our sloops of war (the Growler and the Eagle) there has been nothing new of importance on this lake. Six, of the seven men who were wounded on board the sloops, have been returned on parole. The other man, severely wounded, could not be removed and remains at Isle Aux Noix. One of our men only was killed, and only three British soldiers wounded.¹

A British flag of truce is said to have gone to Burlington by water; about ten soldiers and an officer. They had reached Cumberland Head before they were discovered. It seems they came so far in the night. The people of Champlain and Chazy knew nothing of it. The British have therefore ascertained the fact that there is not a picket guard, nor a single watch boat on the lake, to give notice of their arrival, nor is there a single gun properly placed to give the alarm in case of invasion. Every part of the lake may be sacked at the pleasure of the enemy, without, under the present state of things, the possibility of previous notice. If this is warlike, or military like or general like conduct, I know nothing about it, but I am apt to think it a highly censurable neglect.

Many of the inhabitants of this village have packed up their effects and keep horses ready to depart on the first sight of an enemy. You will understand that the British have now a decided superiority on this lake, and the only sloop remaining has gone into a bay south of Burlington to repair a leak, Lieutenant Macdonough not thinking himself safe in this harbor. Col. Clark keeps all at Burlington. Thus Plattsburgh, its arsenal, its unarmed block house, its public stores are all at the mercy of the enemy. It is hardly worth the while to mention its inhabitants. It would seem

¹ A note to this letter made by Peter S. Palmer is as follows: These vessels were captured on the third of June. During the action the Growler had one killed and eight wounded and the Eagle eleven wounded, including the pilot, Mr Graves. Only those severely wounded were returned on parole to Burlington, from which place the report of the engagement was first brought to Plattsburg; the others were retained as prisoners of war. Information subsequently received proved the loss on the part of the British to have been greater than here stated.

that since the departure of the troops for Sackett's Harbor, they have not been thought worthy of protection.

Another hardship has occurred to the inhabitants on the west side of the lake. Col. Clark and the Commissioners appointed to settle the accounts of the sleighmen, exact that our people should go over the lake to settle their accounts. There are about 200 men interested in this County. Supposing that they could transport themselves to Burlington and attend the Commission and return for \$6 each, it would cost \$1200 and six or eight days lost, at this precious time of the year for farmers. Would it not have been more reasonable that these three Commissioners, who are under pay, should come on this side for about a week. Truly these and almost all things are managed in a most absurd and questionable manner.

XI

From a Letter Written by Peter Saily to the Secretary of the Treasury under Date of August 4, 1813

The enclosed newspapers, under the Plattsburgh head, will give you pretty correct information of the disagreeable visit of the British at this place. Their squadron, on the waters of Lake Champlain, composed of two sloops of war, which they took from us in June last, of three gunboats and two or three row galleys and thirty-four bateaux, landed at this village about eight hundred men, being the whole of their land forces, and, without firing a gun, took possession of the place, burned the arsenal, a block house and the cantonment or camp where the brigade, commanded by the late Col. Pike was stationed last fall and winter, and which had cost the government about thirty thousand dollars, and three storehouses, two of which were my own and had been let to the government. In one of my stores were the goods claimed by Mr John Frothingham of Boston, an American merchant removed from Montreal since the declaration of war, to which he was entitled on paying duties, under the law passed the 27th of February last. The British commander took these goods on board his fleet. I have lost some rigging, two sets of Colors, an anchor and some other trifling articles of public property. My own private loss of property, plundered within my house, exceeds one thousand dollars.

The reason why the property in my house, public and private, was not removed, is that I could not persuade myself that the American force, stationed at Burlington, of 4000 effective men, within twenty miles of this place, could be suffered to remain idle spectators of the destruction of the public property, and of this village, by comparatively a very small British force. Messengers were repeatedly sent to General Hampton, with a request that one regiment might be sent here, but to no effect. When all hope of succor had fled, it was too late to remove all, though the greatest part was secured. It seems that the policy acted upon in this quarter is that the people must defend themselves, or, if not able to do it effectually, must submit to the enemy. Such policy, whether correct or not, is very unpopular here and gives general dissatisfaction to the best friends of the Administration. It is a fact, that on an extent of 115 miles, from the Canada line to the south end of Lake Champlain, on the west side in the state of New York, there is not a military post, nor a soldier to be seen.

XII

From a Letter Written by Peter Saily to the Secretary of the Treasury, December 21, 1813

It may be expected that the British will make a great effort this winter to obtain a decided ascendancy on this lake next spring. Their force this fall was composed of the two sloops they took from us in June last, and six row gallies, two of which are very stout and carry each two guns, one 32 and one 24 pounder. This force was deemed by many almost equal to that under Captain Macdonough. Suffice it to say that ours did not chuse to provoke the British flotilla to combat.

It is confidently reported and believed that our enemy is now building a 24 gun ship. Vessels of that force may navigate on this lake, provided they are built broad and flat. It will be recollected that, during the revolutionary war, General Carlton was on this lake, on board the Royal George, a frigate of thirty guns. Unless therefore a great increase of our naval force on this lake takes place this winter, the British will blow us all out of the water in April next. Permit me to give it as my opinion that two 20 gun ships, and twenty large gallies, rowed with from forty to sixty oars each, mounting heavy long guns, would pretty certainly maintain our ascendancy and protect our shores and public stores. In respect to offensive operations, it must depend on the skill, spirit and enterprise of the commander.

The government might possibly have a view to make an attack on Isle Aux Noix this winter, and, under an expectation of its success, neglect to increase our floating force; But it is not safe I think to rest on this. In the first place Isle Aux Noix is very strongly fortified and of difficult access, and an expedition against that place *might fail*. But, if even successful, the row gallies, if made sufficiently flat at bottom, would answer an excellent purpose in going down the river Sorel and St Lawrence. They might, in the spring be easily floated down the rapids of St Johns and Chambly.

XIII

Letter from Major J Ritter, a British Officer, to Henry Delord, Referring to Private Property Destroyed at the Time of the Murray Raid

Odelltown, [sic] 17 March 1814.

DEAR SIR:

I avail myself of the opportunity of a flag of truce to send you safe and sound the bale of carpet I promised to buy. I have obtained his Excellency's and the custom house permission for doing so, and have paid for the article, as you will find per bill. As our troops have destroyed your carpets, the Governor thought it but little satisfaction to allow the article to go out. But as I have no funds to make good losses sustained by inhabitants, I can only take care that never men under my immediate command, should be guilty of such outrages to distress innocent persons. For your kind and hospitable treatment during my stay at your house, I tender you my best acknowledgments, and with best respects to Madam Delord and the inmates of your house, I am dear Sir,

Yours with esteem

J. RITTER,

Major of the 6th Lt. Infy.

XIV

From a Letter Written by Peter Saily to the Superintendent General of Public Supplies, Dated August 4, 1814

Much clothing and military stores have been sent lately to Whitehall from this place, and the provisions are to be removed from this village, within the line of defense which General Izard has been forming a little south of it. There exists a well founded apprehension that if eleven regiments of the army of Wellington have arrived in Quebec, as is announced in the Canadian newspapers, an attack upon this place and army may soon be expected. No approach however on the part of the enemy has yet been made. Our army is at Chazy and Champlain, about 4000 strong, and including the detachments left here and at Cumberland Head will form a body of about 5000 effectives. I think we ought to have six thousand militia on this frontier. Who will have the ascendancy on the waters of Lake Champlain is somewhat doubtful. As many troops as the British want in Upper Canada have been sent there since the 10th of July and previous to the arrival of the eleven regiments. Forgive this digression. It is well meant.

XV

From a Letter Written by Peter Saily to Major Bleecker, Deputy Quartermaster General, the Date of Which Has Not Been Preserved but Which Was Undoubtedly Written a Few Days after the Battle on the 11th September, 1814

On the 6th instant, the day the British army made its appearance at Plattsburgh, a large quantity of provision was, on the emergency of the occasion, by military orders and means, removed from Mr Levi Platt's barn, used at that time as a storehouse, and placed, as I am informed, within and about every fort and redoubt, and at other places unknown to me. And I am further informed that some barrels of it were used, as precautionary means of defense against fire or otherwise, within the forts and covered with sand. Provision thus placed is certainly not within my control, nor do I consider it under my care. It was taken from me either by order of the Commanding General or Dep. Qr.-M. General and removed where they thought proper, without my knowledge. I had therefore, nothing to do, I conceive, but to wait until the authority that took it from me, should, as soon as practicable, return it into the public stores, where it would be once more under my care and responsibility. This not having been done and having been told only this day that you disclaim taking any care or charge of that scattered public property, and that it remains in very insecure places, and that much of it is already purloined or perishing, I have taken the liberty thus to communicate my ideas to you on that subject, in hopes that some means of obtaining that property and of transporting it to its proper place may be devised: advising you in the meanwhile that I do not possess the means of transportation, for which I have been accustomed to depend on the Qr.-M. Genl. Department. Anything that my agents and myself can do to prevent further injury shall be done cheerfully in aiding the removal, but give me liberty to repeat that I do not hold myself answerable for it, after it has been taken from, and is yet out of my custody.

XVI

From a Letter Written by Peter Saily to Colonel Jenkins, the Quartermaster General, in Regard to Supplies, a Few Days Later than the Previous Letter to the Deputy, the Date of This Letter also Not Having Been Preserved

I have been honored with your letter of the 15th instant in relation to the provisions that had been dispersed by military proceedings at the time that the British made their appearance at this place. I communicated my ideas on the subject, in writing, to Major Bleeker, and am happy to find they correspond with your own. Maj. Bleeker, at once, directed the wagon master to procure teams and, with the help and attendance of one of my agents, gathered together the said provision and returned it into the public stores. Some of it is in very bad order and much of it is lost. We are now employed in inspecting and repacking flour, a large portion of which is damaged.

XVII

From a Letter Written by Peter Saily to General Alexander Macomb, October 20, 1814

I have the honor to inform you of the state of provision in the public stores at this place, which is as follows: About 100,000 rations of pork and about 116,000 rations of beef, in all 216 rations of meat, which will last 72 days if issued at the rate of 3000 rations per day. The flour will about hold out with the meat. The supply of whisky will not last more than 35 days.

Give me leave to suggest the propriety of calling on the Dep. Qr.-Master General, instead of calling on the contractor for additional supplies of meat and flour, for the following reasons. If you call on the contractor, he will procure the provisions by purchasing such as will afford him a profit, and the old deposit will remain on hand and ultimately become unfit for use. On the contrary in directing the Dep. Qr.-Master to procure the provision wanted, he will or ought to call on the store keeper, who will inform him where he can get them. There is in deposit at Whitehall a large quantity of beef and flour, the property of the United States. If pork is wanted, the contractor must furnish it, as there is scarcely any left in deposit, except at this place.

XVIII

From a Letter Written by Peter Saily to General Alexander Macomb, October 25, 1814

As it is impossible to put the laws of the United States in force, principally near the frontier with the means under the direction and control of the Collector, I wrote lately to Capt. Smith, commanding the rifle corps at Chazy, that if he thought himself authorised, I would like it as a favor, if he would render such assistance as the officers of the customs would, in particular cases, require. That letter was put in the hands of Samuel Hicks, Esq., who is himself a custom house officer, whose letter on that subject I inclose.

Should you think proper to write to Capt. Smith and to request that he should direct the officers of detachments and commandants of pickets, wherever stationed, to give the officers of the customs all the reasonable assistance they might want to prevent the passing of cattle and provision into Canada, as well as detect the unlawful introduction of British merchandise, I would not then despair of rendering that unlawful traffic both difficult and hurtful to the speculators. I would ask leave to suggest the propriety of placing a small guard of about six men at the lower village on the lake shore. Judge Hicks and Doctor Carver, both men of firmness and prudence and well acquainted with their duties, would be principally the officers who would apply for assistance.

Permit me to embrace this opportunity to congratulate you on your late exaltation of rank in the army of the United States. This puts me in mind that the last time I had the pleasure to be in your company at your own quarters, I represented to you the destruction of fences by the dragoons and militia and thought an appraisement ought to be made and compensation awarded. You observed something like this, "let me be appointed major general and then I will give the necessary orders." I am happy to find that justice has been so promptly done to you and will so soon be done to me.

XIX

Letter from John Jacob Astor to W. H. Crawford, Secretary
of the Treasury

New York, 31 May 1819.

*The Hon. William H. Crawford,
Secretary of the Treasury.*

SIR:

I inclose a letter from Mr Saily, the Collector of Customs at Plattsburgh. The object of that letter and my writing to you is related in the letter itself.

In 1811, I had made extensive arrangements for conducting the Indian trade, particularly within our own territory. When the late war of 1812 took place, I had a large property in the Indian country, which was traded for furs, and particularly at Michilimackinac, which at the time of the capture was, by capitulation, given up. There being then no direct mode of conveyance to bring them there, they were, from time to time, sent to Montreal, and from there were sent into the District of Champlain. Of this circumstance I informed the Administration, who had no objection to my getting my property, and Mr Gallatin gave me a letter to Mr Saily, who was very civil and obliging, though strict in his official duty. I supposed that he was entitled, in case of condemnation of any of my furs (which I did not expect) to a share, and I gave him, I think, five hundred dollars, in lieu of any claim. The furs, as he says, were always seized and sent here, where bond was given for the supposed value of them, which, on application (through the Court) to government was given up.

As respects the character of Mr Saily I can say that I have been acquainted with him for about thirty years and more, that I believe him to be a gentleman of the most strict integrity, an excellent public officer and a friend to the government.

I am about to leave here for France and will be some time in Europe. If I can be of use by executing some orders for you or family, I will be happy in doing it. A letter directed to me, care of Mr Gallatin, will reach me. Your order for Teakewood or Plants I have sent by two different vessels to India, but neither of them ~~has~~ yet returned.

I am very Respectfully

Sir, Your Obt. Servant,

JOHN JACOB ASTOR.

[In a note from Astor to Sailly inclosing a copy of this letter, Astor said:]

I have received your letter which I have this day forwarded to the Secretary of the Treasury, and wrote him one of which I inclose a copy. I know I have said more than what is necessary about you, but as it can do no harm, I trust you will excuse me.

XX

Letter from Chancellor Walworth to Peter Saily Palmer

*Pine Grove, Saratoga Springs,
Jany. 12, 1866.*

*Peter S. Palmer, Esquire,
Plattsburgh.*

It was my good fortune to have enjoyed the friendship and confidence of your grandfather, the Honorable Peter Saily, from the time of my first visit to Plattsburgh in the autumn of 1809, until his death. He was a warm, steady and devoted friend of mine at all times, and I owe much of my success in my profession, and in life, to his disinterested kindness and patronage.

He was a well educated, intelligent and strong minded French gentleman, of the old school; and when I first knew him, he had made himself so thoroughly acquainted with the English language, that he wrote and spoke it about as well and as classically as a well educated native American. He was a large well built person, and I think he told me his mother was of German extraction, from the north of France. He had for a time, in his early life, belonged to a corps of young gentlemen, of respectable families, who were in the capacity of a bodyguard to the King of France. I recollect very well the description he gave me of a scene that occurred one winter, when they went out to hunt a wild boar.

The boar was in a piece of woods and the ground was covered with a considerable body of snow. The party surrounded the wood and then advanced into it on all sides, to ferret out the ferocious animal. Mr Saily, being by himself in a part of the woods, discovered an immensely huge boar coming directly towards him, snorting and upon the full jump and very near to him. He immediately raised his gun and discharged it at the head of the infuriated animal and then turned and ran from him at his utmost speed. Presently the boar came up behind him and, thrusting his nose between his legs, raised him from the ground, tore his pantaloons with his tusks, and pitched him some distance forward into the snow, where he lay quite still, while he heard a great commotion near him; which, after a time, ceased. Then, getting up, he found he had shot the boar between the eyes, and that the commotion he had heard, while he lay concealed in the snow, was the death struggle of the expiring animal.

Mr Saily was one of the early settlers of Plattsburgh, where he was for many years a successful merchant. He was a man of stern unbending integrity in all his business relations. He was a member of the State Legislature of New York, and when some of his political friends desired to obtain a charter for a bank, he was called on and told that each member of the Legislature, whether he voted for or against the bank, was to have a certain number of shares of the stock assigned to him, which would be worth considerable above par. He enquired whether it was really so that each member was to receive the same number of shares whether he voted for or against the bill. And being answered in the affirmative, he immediately said, then I shall vote against the bill. He did vote against the bank; but the charter was granted and the shares were in fact assigned to him. He refused however to take them, although they were worth considerable above par; considering the arrangement an indirect mode of influencing the members to vote for the bill, as none of them could get the bonus unless the charter was granted by the votes of a majority of the members.

He was a representative in Congress from the Plattsburgh District from 1805 to 1807, and after the expiration of his congressional term he was appointed, by President Jefferson, Collector of the Customs for the District of Champlain; which office he continued to hold until his death. He was a gentleman of unquestionable courage, as well as of uncompromising integrity. When a gang of five or six smugglers, armed with deadly weapons, broke into his office, for the purpose of robbing it of the smuggled goods stored there, he, single handed, attacked them, shot one of them and drove them all out before him.

I may add that he was a liberal patron of all public improvements and institutions of learning, and was, withal, a polished gentleman, a good neighbor, a faithful friend; and was almost idolized by his family and relatives.

It gives me great pleasure to give my humble testimony to the many virtues of such a man, and such a friend. And I am gratified to learn that you intend to prepare a short memorial of him. I think he said he was a native of Lorraine.

Yours with respect,

REUBEN H. WALWORTH.

The history of the world is a vast and complex subject, encompassing the lives of countless individuals and the events that have shaped our civilization. From the earliest times, when our ancestors first emerged from the forests and caves, to the present day, the human story has been one of constant change and growth. The history of the world is not just a record of events, but a reflection of the human condition, of our struggles, our triumphs, and our enduring quest for knowledge and understanding.

In the beginning, the world was a place of mystery and wonder, a land of uncharted territories and undiscovered secrets. Our ancestors, driven by a sense of curiosity and a desire for survival, embarked on a journey of exploration and discovery. They sought to understand the world around them, to uncover the secrets of nature, and to establish a place for themselves in the universe. Their journeys were fraught with danger and hardship, but they were also filled with a sense of purpose and a belief in the possibility of a better future.

As the centuries passed, the human story continued to unfold, with each generation building upon the achievements of the last. The great civilizations of the ancient world, such as the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Romans, left behind a legacy of knowledge and art that has inspired and shaped the world ever since. Their discoveries, their inventions, and their works of art are a testament to the human capacity for creativity and innovation.

But the history of the world is not just a story of progress and achievement. It is also a story of struggle and conflict, of the battles fought for power, for territory, and for the right to live in peace and harmony. The human condition is one of constant tension, of the struggle between the good and the evil, the light and the dark. It is a story of the human spirit, of the resilience and the courage that have allowed us to overcome our darkest moments and to build a world that is more just and more beautiful than the one we were born into.

And so, the history of the world continues to unfold, with each day bringing new challenges and new opportunities. We are a people of great potential, of great strength, and of great hope. We have the power to create a world that is more peaceful, more prosperous, and more just than the one we have known. We have the power to overcome our darkest moments and to build a future that is bright and full of promise. The history of the world is our story, and it is up to us to write the next chapter.

XXI

The grave of Peter Saily, in Riverside Cemetery, Plattsburg, is marked by a plain marble slab with the following inscription:

In
Memory of
Peter Saily, Esqr.,
who died
on the 16th day of March
1826
aged LXXII years.

A native of Lorraine in France
he adopted America as his country
in 1785.

The strength of his intellect, the
benevolence of his heart and the
spotless integrity of his life made
him esteemed as a citizen, respected
in various public offices and
beloved as a friend and relative.

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